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ABSTRACT

This report offers a framework and conceptual base for a statewide discussion of public school choice. A review of choice activities in other states and an analysis of typical components in a choice program are provided. Organized into four main chapters, the report starts with an explanation of the concept of choice followed by a review of the historical background of the modern choice movement. Next is a detailed description of the use of magnet schools in systems of choice, followed by a review of choice programs around the nation, including indepth portraits of programs in Minnesota, Massachusetts, and New York. Chapter 4 analyzes the shared characteristics of the choice programs studied, including school size, school bureaucracy, development of a sense of community, and role of parents. The fourth chapter is followed by summaries and analyses of the main types of choice programs used in the nation. Appended are 177 references, 79 interviews, Cambridge entrance criteria, citywide planning advisory council bylaws (Fall River, Massachusetts), and Minnesota Enrollment Options Program sample board resolution. (SI)

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PUBLIC SCHOOL CHOICE: NATIONAL TRENDS AND INITIATIVES

NEW JERSEY STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

December, 1988

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PREFACE

Public school choice is a topic which is generating considerable discussion around the nation. Broadly defined as parental selection of schools, the movement for public school choice has made significant progress in several states. Minnesota has a voluntary statewide choice program allowing parents to select for their children any public elementary or high school in the state. That program will become mandatory in 1990-91. Choice also exists within local systems in such places as Cambridge, Lowell, and Fall River in Massachussetts, Community District 4 in New York City and Montclair, New Jersey.

Some choice programs allow parental selection among existing schools as they are, while others recast schools to provide specific curricular foci and allow students to choose a program. Most systems stress three rationales:

- Controlled competition
- Expansion of opportunities for educators, families and students
- Recognition that there is no one best school for all students or educators.

In reviewing programs of choice several key components have emerged:

- Choice is frequently most successful when options are tailored to the individual community and its needs.
- Smaller school units offer the greatest potential for creation of a wide range of speciality schools.
- A sense of community is developed or heightened.
- Increased parental involvement is promoted.

Special attention is given in this report to the role of alternative schools and magnets in a system of choice. Although magnets are used more frequently to desegregate, they are not limited to this use. And all desegregation programs studied allow some degree of choice.

The report also analyzes choice programs targeting specific populations, including dropouts and other high risk students and high school juniors and seniors who would profit from college coursework.

Organized into five main chapters, the study starts with an explanation of the concept of choice followed by a review of the historical background of the modern choice movement. Next is a detailed description of use of magnet schools in systems of choice, followed by a review of choice programs around the nation, including in-depth portraits of programs in Minnesota, Massachussetts, and New York. Chapter Four analyzes the shared characteristics of the choice programs studied including school size, school bureaucracy, development of a sense of community, and the role of parents. The concluding chapter contains summaries and analyses of the main types of choice programs being used in the nation.

PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

This report is designed to provide a framework and conceptual base for a statewide discussion of public school choice. It offers a review of choice activities in other states and an analysis of typical components in a choice program.

Public hearings will be held in each county in order to receive all testimony on the subject.

For further information regarding specific times and location for the public hearings please call the Office of the Special Assistant to the Commissioner at 609-984-2955.

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Many people provided assistance at various stages in the preparation of this study. My assistant, Maria O'Brien, was instrumental in every phase of the project. Her research, writing and editorial skills added immeasurably to the report.

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Our examination of choice throughout the nation would not have been possible without the cooperation of the following people: Director of School Finance Judy Richardson of the Arizona Department of Education; Assistant Legal Counsel Nate Coulter of the Governor's Office in Arkansas; Assemblywoman Marian LaFollette, Consultant Lynn Hartzler of Alternative Education, Public Schools of Choice and Independent Study of the California Department of Education, and Assistant Superintendent Debbie Ann LaSalle and Director of Administrative Services Al Nicora of Richmond Public Schools, California; Assistant Commissioner Dan Stewart of the Colorado Department of Education; Race/Equity Consultant Elliot Williams of the Connecticut Department of Education; Educational Policy Director Fred Atherton of the Florida State Board of Community Colleges; Designs for Change Senior Policy Associate Suzanne Davenport and Options for Knowledge Director Patricia Helbig of Chicago, Illinois; Doug Gross of the Governor's Office in Iowa; Special Assistant to the Superintendent for Magnet Schools Joyce Thomas of Prince George's County, Maryland; Director of Public Information Burt Giroux, Parent Information Center staff Eileen Bacci and Margaret Gallagher of Cambridge

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To Commissioner Saul Cooperman, I am grateful for the opportunity to conduct this study and for his unfailing personal support.

It is my hope that this report will serve as a framework and resource for a statewide discussion of public school choice.

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INTRODUCTION

Five years ago, the National Commission on Excellence in Education issued its report on the quality of education in America. Entitled A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform, the report shocked the nation by warning that "the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a nation and people" (National Commission on Excellence, 1983:5).

New Jersey has embraced the challenge of educational excellence with both determination and innovation. In recent years, the state has implemented an alternate route for teacher certification, higher teacher salaries, and raised student competency levels for graduation. Both students and teachers are now meeting higher standards and the drive toward improving the quality of public education continues.

Past educational reform movements have been aimed at improving the quality of education by using many different approaches. The "excellence movement" brought on a "back to basics" attitude -- increased graduation requirements, testing initiatives, more traditional academic subjects and reduced electives for greater student competency. A growing body of literature on effective schools indicates certain characteristics including principal leadership, high student expectations, and a stronger home-school relationship contribute to a school's effectiveness. Now some educators are looking to the expanded role of parents -- allowing them to choose a public school -- as a method to encourage improved education.

The current national debate over public school choice provides an opportunity to evaluate and discuss the potential benefits and drawbacks of parental selection of public schools. Proponents view choice as a significant element in the drive to improve schools while opponents say it is a threat to the stability of public education.

The issue of parental selection of public schools has its origin in earlier educational reform movements, but is most clearly traced to the more recent activities of the 1960s.

At least 23 states to date have either adopted or are considering some form of state planning for educational choice. In the past three years, many states and communities have experimented with various models of educational choice for parents and their children. Plans designed to facilitate choice have varied widely with some emphasizing choice between districts (interdistrict), choice among schools within a district (intradistrict), or choice among smaller academic units within a larger unit (schools within a school or schools within a single building).

In his January, 1988 State of the State message, Governor Thomas H. Kean asked Education Commissioner Saul Cooperman "to examine the most important questions surrounding public school choice ... Is there evidence that choice actually improves schools? Is choice possible with our existing system of school administration, transportation and finance? Does the public support choice?" In his charge to the Commissioner, Governor Kean ruled out consideration of two choice systems: tuition tax credits or cash vouchers for parents who chose nonpublic schools. But beyond these limitations, the Governor wanted a searching consideration of the matter. Consequently, in February, 1988, Commissioner Cooperman appointed Dr. Frank J. Esposito, vice president for academic affairs at Kean College, as special assistant with a specific charge to study public school choice and make recommendations regarding the issue. This report, which is the product of his work, conveys the results of his work. It defines choice, traces its historic origins and delineates local and state choice programs. The pros and cons of these programs and others which target specific populations and high risk students are emphasized as well. This marks the completion of the first part of the gubernatorial charge. Beyond the information presented, however, the report is intended to encourage public debate regarding the potential advantages and disadvantages of public school choice for New Jersey. This report contains no recommendation for implementation. Public hearings during the next several months will facilitate discussion allowing educators and the public to thoroughly explore possible benefits, limitations and feasibility of choice. The special assistant and the Commissioner will analyze all public testimony prior to the development of specific recommendations to the Governor.

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND

WHAT IS CHOICE?

Educational choice has existed in American education since the colonial era. Initially, choice was between private academies or church-operated schools.

Over the 19th century, the selection of schools expanded as parents (or at least parents with the opportunity and the means) could choose to send their children to public or private institutions, including an increasing number of parochial schools. Such choices still exist, and more than 12 percent of all school children today attend private or religiously affiliated schools. Choice, then, as a practical part of education in the United States, is nothing new.

In this study, "choice" will be defined as parental selection of a public school. The term will apply to the selection of any school within or between school systems, or of a component with an academic program of its own functioning within a larger school (that is, a school within a school). The term will also be used to describe choice among several distinct schools functioning and housed within a single building.

If only informally, many Americans participate in educational choice. Most frequently they indirectly choose their schools when they select a residence in a school district they think is suitable. Many realtors claim that the perceived quality of the local school district is a major factor in the client's purchase of a residence. Of course, school selection based upon residence is limited by the family's financial status. But should choice be extended among public schools by other means? Or is education a unique kind of commodity that does not lend itself to the provision of formal mechanisms of choice? According to one recent survey, most Americans favor choice. The 18th Annual Gallup Poll of 1987 showed that 68 percent of those polled wished they had the right to choose which public schools their children would attend in their community.

The National Governors Association 1986 report Time for Results: The Governors 1991 Report on Education endorsed public school choice with these recommendations for states (NGA, 1986:13):

- Expanding opportunities for students by adopting legislation that permits families to select from among kindergarten to twelfth grade public schools in their state, and permitting juniors and seniors to attend accredited public postsecondary institutions, with tax funds following the students;

- Encouraging and assisting school districts to develop more effective parent involvement techniques; and

- Reminding parents that they can improve their children's achievement by working closely with the school.

Proponents of choice argue that it can provide better matches of students' learning needs with school programs and revitalize traditional education by a focus on specialty or magnet schools. In short, supporters maintain that choice will promote educational excellence. Choice advocates also point out what they believe was the lack of success experienced by the estimated 700,000 students who will dropout. In some of the nation's cities the number of dropouts approaches 50 percent. Many are minority children. In their recent book, Winning The Brain Race: A Bold Plan to Make Our Schools Competitive (1988:1,38), David J. Kearns, Xerox Corporation chairman and Denis P. Doyle, of the Hudson Institute, say another 700,000 students graduate functionally illiterate each year. They maintain that corporations spend billions of dollars to "re-educate" these graduates who are not ready for the workplace.

Another argument for choice is that it will expand parental involvement in the schools. The extent of that involvement currently varies widely in choice districts. However, in general, such districts do try to develop a more extensive role for parents than is usually the case in conventional schools.

Opponents feel that choice will result in the "creaming off" of the most talented students into particular schools and create soaring transportation costs which would drain academic budgets. Other than the disagreement on the impact of choice on educational quality, the sides also disagree on its effect on desegregation. Those who support choice point to its use, especially in Massachussetts and in the nation's major cities, as a tool for successful desegregation and improved school quality. Opponents believe choice will not be able to remedy what they view as a problem associated with residential housing patterns and socioeconomic differences. Some fear choice will worsen this problem.

Choice opponents also frequently believe that the high dropout rate in American cities can be better remedied by improved federal and state funding. They view an expansion of parental involvement as difficult to achieve within the context of the economic pressures faced by families to maintain their standard of living.

Can parental choice be a means of reducing the dropout rate? Or should other issues relating to economic differences be addressed first by society?

Proponents of choice through an array of specialty schools with a particular academic focus or learning approach argue much of the current curricular blandness can be lessened by this approach. Specialty schools cover a comprehensive curriculum and meet common goals regarding the skills, knowledge and character values needed for a democratic society. But teachers approach their subjects with the focus of the school theme. For example, math in a fine arts school might be taught in an algebra class, but also in a drama class when designing play sets. The theme would involve in some way all aspects of the curriculum.

Opponents of the use of choice through an array of specialty schools argue that not all teachers are trained to teach from a particular disciplinary focus and that retraining would be too expensive for most school districts. They also maintain that a traditional curriculum without a specialized focus has met the needs of most students for a long time. Why change something that works for most people, they ask.

Some say choice will encourage existing schools to improve simply by making them compete for students.

Others are beginning to question the methods and organization of public education itself. The growing body of research on effective schools suggests that large bureaucratic school systems are not the best way to organize the education of children (Walberg and Fowler, 1988). Smaller, more personalized units are preferable in terms of cultivating student success. Some choice supporters say a system of choice must be based on schools offering programs that match students' interests and needs. Without diversity and quality, no real choices exist, they say.

The characteristics of effective schools include elements found in both non-choice and choice systems of education. In New Jersey's Effective Demonstration Schools Program (1986-89) 17 participating schools worked to master each of these positive characteristics:

* Strong instructional leadership.
* A school climate conducive to learning.
* High teacher expectations of pupils.
* A clear and focused mission of mastery of basic skills for all pupils.
* An ongoing assessment of student progress.
* A supportive home-school relationship.

Are these qualities promoted or ignored in successful systems of public school choice? Research shows that a school can be effective even without the introduction of the concept of parental selection. But will these qualities be further enhanced in successful choice systems with their frequently greater senses of community, increased teacher leadership and more extensive parental role? In the chapters that follow these and other questions will be examined in several choice systems. But first a review of the historical background of choice may help put the issue in perspective.

TABLE 1.1

DEFINITION OF TERMS

In this review of American systems of educational choice, a number of terms used are identified here for the convenience of the reader.

1. Neighborhood Schools -- are schools serving a specific attendance area.
2. Alternative Schools -- are schools created as options to existing traditional neighborhood schools.
3. Magnet Programs or Schools -- usually are established to attract either white or minority students in order to racially balance a school district. Typically these are thematic based on specific curricular or pedagogical foci (i.e. Montessori or Open Education).
4. Open Enrollment -- usually refers to a system wherein parents can enroll their child in any school in a certain area (i.e. within a district or across district lines).
5. Open or Developmental Schools -- organize learning around interest centers. They are frequently found as alternatives in a system of choice through open enrollment within a public district.
6. Schools within a School -- are smaller semi-autonomous units usually found in large high schools to create a different learning environment. These subunits are frequently based upon a particular theme or focus. Although some districts divide larger schools into smaller units for administrative purposes without a particular academic specialty (European House Plan), the schools within schools choice system offers diversity through distinct programs or philosophical approaches.
7. Schools within a Single Building -- are individual schools (each with its own staff, student body and principal/director) which are housed in one building.
8. Schools without Walls - are community-based learning centers with a curriculum consisting of community-centered activities and the utilization of practical experts in the activities being studied.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF CHOICE

To some degree, choice has always existed for those who could afford it. However, the modern choice movement, which proposes choice for all regardless of income, finds its strongest roots in the turbulent 1960s when a number of influential critics appeared on the national scene. Dubbed the "romantic critics" because of their reverence for the individual child, these writers also helped launch the modern and ongoing alternative schools movement of the 1970s by their biting criticism of American education.

Jonathan Kozol and Herbert Kohl were the most prominent among the "romantic critics." Kozol's Death at an Early Age (1967) was a searing indictment of the institutional racism of the Boston school system. Kohl wrote 36 Children (1967) to detail the hopelessness of New York City schools. Other significant writers who caught public attention were George Dennison with Lives of Children (1969) and John Holt for How Children Learn (1969).

These best-selling books built upon the educational insights of Jean Piaget and the philosophical perspectives delineated by the social critic Paul Goodman, who wrote Growing Up Absurd (1960), Compulsory Miseducation (1964) and Community of Scholars (1962). Kohl, Kozol and Dennison criticized the inhumanity and destructiveness of traditional American education, drawing their examples of the psychological destruction of children from urban schools. These books had an impact on the public mind. Holt became even more well-known as his work was widely discussed among parents and educators throughout the country. Kozol's book helped bring about an awareness of segregation in Boston's schools while Kohl's work played a part in the successful efforts of many to reform and decentralize the New York City school system. Kozol, Kohl and Holt all played a role in the formation of alternate approaches to public education; Kozol and Kohl were instrumental in the founding of alternative schools. Holt became pioneer of the alternative known as home schooling.

Others thought that the provision of alternatives to public education was not enough and argued that new approaches were needed to reshape public education. Most notable of these critics were Ivan Illich with Deschooling Society (1971) and Charles Silberman in Crisis in the Classroom (1970). Silberman thought that public schools were failing to be "great equalizers," to use Horace Mann's term, in facilitating the movement of the poor and minorities into the mainstream of American life. Illich called for a new view of education based more on a child's interest.

Three years after Silberman's hard-hitting book, further awareness of the modern choice movement occurred with the publication of Mario Fantini's Public Schools of Choice (1973). In it, Fantini detailed a model for public schools of choice which provided parents with "direct choice among alternative education forms" and stressed individual decision making (Fantini, 1973:39). With this work, the concept of public school choice emerged as a possible solution for the school reform demanded by the "romantic critics" and by leaders of the alternative school movement.

Almost 20 years ago, Silberman wrote "There is, and can be, no one curriculum suitable for all time, or for all students at a given time" (Silberman, 1970: 332). The current choice and alternative school movements are based on the shared premise that not all students benefit from the standard school curriculum. Some argue that American education has been trying to do the impossible by attempting to "teach every child in the same way at the same time" (Smith, 1974: 7). Despite the major reform efforts of this century, the structure of American education remains basically the same: a K-12 graded model with school days of standard periods and teachers teaching a curriculum that has been only sightly tailored for individual student abilities and interests.

In the 1970s Alum Rock, California became a testing ground for these ideas. While not clear cut, the results did provide empirical results for the critics and theorists who comprised the infant choice movement.

THE ALUM ROCK EXPERIMENT

From 1972-77, Alum Rock Union Elementary School District in San Jose, California, became the site of the most well-known "voucher" experiment. Parents were given vouchers (certificates worth a specified dollar amount) which they used to select any district public school.

Federally funded by the Office of Economic Opportunity and sponsored by The National Institute on Education, Alum Rock was intended to be a voucher experiment involving private schools. Because of opposition from education groups and limits by the California constitution, choice in Alum Rock was never expanded beyond the public sector. Although parents used vouchers in this modified public school choice experiment, this study of public school choice does not include the possibility of choice by vouchers. But it is appropriate that we examine the experiment because the option to choose a school was part of it.

Choice researcher Mary Anne Raywid maintains that Alum Rock was not a true public school choice system because although as many as 50 minischools developed in the district's 25 elementary schools over the five-year demonstration, very few actualized themes or offered alternatives to the traditional educational approach (Raywid, 1985: 435-467). More importantly, there were no significant differences in student outcomes.

Raywid also says the following factors in the Alum Rock experiment were "crucial limitations on the success potential of the Alum Rock alternatives" (Ibid., 441).

1. **There was never local interest in options or diversification on the part of the community or school authorities.**

2. **There was no evidence of dissatisfaction within the district prior to the experiment, and in fact parents had been pleased with the schools.**

3. **District officials' interest in the project was limited to the solution of financial problems, the desire to decentralize school governance and a general concern with increased parental participation.**

4. The timing of the award left very little time for designing the initial alternatives, and time was not subsequently made available for doing so.

5. There was no district-level support in the planning of programs or in the provision of staff development programs or in the provision of staff development activities for designing or implementing them.

Voucher researcher Margaret Tannenbaum has said that Alum Rock also lacked external and internal competition, which many researchers view as a critical component in a choice system. External competition in Alum Rock was non-existent because private and parochial schools were excluded and teachers' jobs were guaranteed (Tannenbaum, interview, October, 1988).

The attempt at Alum Rock to create options within the public system yielded mixed results and may have been doomed from the start by the circumstances delineated by Raywid and Tannenbaum. Few have called the demonstration a success. Many parents failed to use the choice option and when they did, it was to choose the same neighborhood schools to which their children would have been assigned. Teachers reported that while personal control over their own classrooms increased, so did their workload. Unfortunately Alum Rock produced virtually no conclusive results regarding the operation of a public school voucher system (Raywid, Winter 1985).

Present-day experiments based upon alternative or magnet schools generally provide more valuable and conclusive evidence regarding the feasibility of public school choice. In order to best comprehend these modern initiatives one must first understand the alternative schools movement.

ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS MOVEMENT

Recent studies, especially those of Goodlad and Sizer, have commented on the relative sameness of education in America. The standard approaches to learning found in traditional schools remain the norm even though a vast body of research on diverse learning styles and needs of students has recently emerged.

Professor Vernon H. Smith commented that "in a democratic society, people should have choices about all important aspects of their lives" (Smith, 1974). Smith also argued that our current traditional model of education was based on a monolithic sameness which evolved out of the industrial age that was a time of limited knowledge about how children learn. Our society has rapidly changed from an industrial to a technological one. We now know that the match between learning styles and educational programs is extremely important for the individual learner.

The mid-1970s report of the National Commission on the Reform of Secondary Education urged that each school district provide a broad range of alternative schools and programs so that every student would have meaningful educational options available (Smith 1978: 172). A growing core of educators, including Sizer, continue to press for the creation of public alternative schools. Alternative modes of organization, specialization and learning have become available in both the public and private sectors in increasing numbers.

Alternative schools are schools created as options to existing traditional neighborhood schools. When used in a choice system alternative schools are normally accessible to all students. In short, they provide different learning approaches than traditional neighborhood schools and are open to all students equally. A common misperception is that alternative schools are only used for students who are unsuccessful in traditional schools.

The movement to create public and nonpublic school alternatives has been steadily growing in the past 25 years. From a mere handful in the early 1960s, researchers estimate today there are more than 10,000 public and private alternative schools in the nation (Raywid, 1988).

Frequently housed in traditional school systems, alternatives are either valid methodological or thematic alternatives, or schools of last resort for potential dropouts or students with behavior problems.

Could a public system of choice adopt some of the characteristics of successful alternative schools? A composite of available research shows that in order to work most effectively, alternative schools should have the characteristics listed in Table 1.2.

According to Smith, alternative schools have reported less vandalism, violence, truancy and fewer student and teacher absences when compared with traditional schools in the same district. A 1981 study of alternative schools by Raywid found that alternative schools "typically lead to greater academic achievement on the part of their students" (Raywid 1985: 460). Raywid also maintains that her research shows that alternative school graduates are successful in college. She also writes that alternatives are the best way to reach those who were previously unsuccessful in school.

Some educators and researchers emphasize different methods to reach unsuccessful students, but no one directly opposes alternatives as a way to deal with them.

TABLE 1.2

CHARACTERISTICS OF SUCCESSFUL INDIVIDUAL SCHOOLS OF CHOICE

Successful schools of choice are separate schools or "programs" that are distinct administrative units with their own personnel (students and staff), who spend most or all of the school day together. This definition is important to distinguishing schools, or schools-within-schools, of choice from the opportunity to choose curricular electives.

1. Educational goals represent a broader concern with student accomplishment than content and skill mastery. A sustained interest in student cognitive, personal, and social development is typical -- character as well as intellectual development.

2. Each is small enough to permit the personalizing of education -- and organized so as to realize this purpose.

3. Avoidance of the usual power structure of schools, with authority concentrated in the principal's office. Education-related decisions are made by individual teachers and groups of teachers.

4. School organization is sufficiently non-formulized in official policies and regulations and non-bureaucratized to permit organizational flexibility and thus responsiveness to individual cases.

5. Structure, scheduling, and general expectations within the school are conducive to professional interaction and collaboration among teachers.

6. Extended roles and responsibilities for both staff and students. Teachers are more broadly responsible for student growth and accomplishment, and for total school effectiveness, than elsewhere; and students feel more responsibility for the school, as well as for their own progress.

7. Each school has a clear set of goals -- specifying a mission that is embraced by all staff members.

8. There is considerable self-consciousness within the school about the type of place it is and wants to be -- a preoccupation with school climate, ethos, or moral order.

9. Instructional approaches enriched by the inclusion of experiential learning strategies, and by independent study possibilities.

Source: Mary Anne Raywid, Professor of Education, Hofstra University, Hempstead, New York.

CHAPTER TWO

MAGNET PROGRAMS AND SCHOOLS AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHOICE

A Sampling of Large Systems

Among the variety of educational alternatives found in the United States, magnet programs and schools were originally designed to achieve voluntary desegregation by offering special curricular themes and instructional approaches not found in neighborhood schools.

School systems use magnets in three ways: (1)a few magnets used by a district for desegregation, (2)a city-suburban student transfer program involving magnets, and (3)a system made up of all magnets. Most urban districts use magnets in one of these ways to foster desegregation.

Parental choice already is embedded into the magnet school approach to desegregation in a public school system. Almost every desegregation plan since 1980 has included some form of parental choice, according to Gary Orfield, a professor of political science at the University of Chicago (Newsweek, September 9, 1988).

Research indicates that many magnets have successfully integrated students and improved student achievement through curricular specialties (i.e. technology, the media and performing arts). Educators in Cambridge, Fall River and Lowell, Massachusetts, and Montclair, New Jersey have moved from the traditional use of magnets for desegregation to the creation of systems of all thematic alternatives for all students as part of a choice system. In many cases, traditional schools remain as alternatives in the system.

The following randomly selected systems use magnet programs and schools to achieve desegregation and, in most cases, to enhance parental choice. The list provides a sampling of existing systems and is not intended to be all inclusive.

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

Background

In 1981, the Chicago Board of Education entered into a desegregation agreement with a federal court specifying that the city would establish educational initiatives for integration. These included magnet schools and magnet programs in neighborhood schools and a voluntary transfer option. Enrichment programs in schools that were not expected to achieve full integration also were included.

When these magnets were first introduced in 1981-82, students were accepted on a first-come first-served basis. As programs grew, the city found inequities in this enrollment procedure; therefore, entrance requirements were established for seven gifted and talented programs and three classical schools. School officials maintain that entrance to all other programs is based on racial balance, space and grade level. After all these requirements are fulfilled, students are randomly selected to fill the remaining spaces.

Program

Chicago has 35 elementary and 10 secondary citywide magnet schools for desegregation. These include:

Classical Schools
Scholastic Academies
Academic Magnet Schools
Foreign Language Academies
Humanities Academies
Math-Science Academies
Metropolitan High Schools

There are also 62 elementary and 30 high school magnet programs in neighborhood schools to attract students for desegregation. These include programs of career education, foreign languages, computer studies, fine arts, business, etc.

Also as part of the plan, community academies -- schools with no racial guidelines created to enrich educational opportunities for minorities -- replicate magnet themes at 20 sites in the city.

Budget Implications

Although the state reimburses the city about one-third of its transportation costs, Chicago is currently spending $31 million to bus about 30,000 students to magnet schools and programs.

The city could not provide a comparison of the average per pupil costs in magnet schools compared with neighborhood schools.

Evaluation

Chicago, the third largest public school system in the country, has been criticized by former U.S. Education Secretary William J. Bennett as the nation's worst. "You've got close to an educational meltdown here," Bennett said in a New York Times article (July13, 1988).

Although school officials there say that all city schools are integrated (Helbig, interview, 1988), the dropout rate is about 45 percent and last year's average college entrance exam scores of students in nearly half of Chicago's schools "rated in the bottom 1 percent in the nation" (New York Times, July 13, 1988).

Many lawmakers are not happy with the performance of the city's public schools. A bill passed by the legislature on July 2, 1988 proposed an overhaul of the entire system by the redistribution of authority.

If signed by Governor James R. Thompson, the bill would eliminate lifelong principal tenure; dissolve the 11-member board of education and replace it with five mayoral appointees; cut management staff; put a ceiling on central administrative costs; and give teachers a greater say in the running of their schools.

DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA

Background

Dade County's first magnet school was the Performing and Visual Arts Center (PAVAC) which opened in 1971 to enhance integration.

In 1976-77, the county expanded the performing and visual arts magnet programs at the elementary and middle school levels with one at each level in the county's four attendance areas. In 1986, the county adopted guidelines and procedures for the creation of magnets to enhance the quality of education, further integration and help schools with declining enrollments.

Magnet programs continued to grow and the county now has 30 magnet programs and two full magnet schools. An additional six magnet programs and another magnet school will also be options in 1989-90.

Through the collaborative efforts of the county public schools, Dade County Community College and Florida International University, the New World School of the Arts High School (grades 10-12) opened in 1987. This magnet is housed on the community college's downtown campus.

Program

The county is divided into four geographical zones but magnets are open to all county students. Some restrictions apply in cases of extreme distance. Currently, 8,500 of the 270,000 county students are enrolled in magnets.

All schools have minimal requirements such as academic and past performance and teacher recommendations. About half of these programs have special admissions requirements. These are mostly in the form of auditions in the performing arts programs.

Aside from the magnets, a transfer option allows minorities to change schools if it improves integration and students with special curriculum interests can attend schools outside their attendance zones if resident districts do not offer the educational area (as long as desegregation guidelines are maintained). The resident district provides transportation up to two miles, but if distance to the nonresident schools is greater, parents must provide their own transportation.

Budget Implications

Magnets were mainly started with local funds. The county also sought federal money and used Chapter Two funds for eligible students. The state supported somewhat in the creation of the New World School of the Arts.

Transportation costs have escalated somewhat, but not incredibly because students' choices are limited to their geographical attendance zones.

Evaluation

These schools have improved integration so much that schools in black areas that had not been integrated for 15 years now have white students on waiting lists.

The most positive result of the magnets has been an increase in educational aspirations in neighborhood schools. Parents of children in these schools are looking at methods to improve and upgrade their programs, according to Dr. J.L. DeChurch, Dade County Public Schools executive director of the Division of Special Academic and Talented Programs.

LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Background

A 1976 court order directed Los Angeles Unified School District to bus students for mandatory desegregation with the goal of achieving a school ratio of 60 percent minorities and 40 percent non-minorities (some schools must achieve a 70-30 percent ratio). At that time, the school district proposed supplemental magnet schools for voluntary desegregation (Battaglia, interview, 1988).

Program

Five years later, a state vote called Proposition One, ended mandatory busing. But magnet schools and programs continued to grow. From four programs in 1976, there are now 87 magnet programs or full magnet schools in the district. Of the district's 592,000 students, 27,000 or about 4.5 percent, attend magnet programs/schools. Of those 27,000 about 80 percent or 21,600 live outside the attendance zone of the magnet (Battaglia, interview, 1988).

Some of the program or school themes are:

- Open Schools
- Business
- Communication Arts
- Computer Science
- Math and Science
- Biology
- Marine Science
- Animal and Biological Studies
- Fundamental Schools
- Gifted and High Ability
- Health and Medical
- Humanities
- Language/International Studies
- Music Academy

Performing Art
Teacher Training Academy
Trilingual Center
Visual Arts

Students who want to enroll in the magnets must apply. Applicants are randomly selected by computer for enrollment according to certain restrictions including racial guidelines, space availability, amount of time on a waiting list or condition of the home school (overcrowding) (Battaglia, interview, 1988).

Last year, the district received 30,000 applications for 7,800 openings. Even though nothing binds the district to provide magnets, the demand for these programs is increasing (Battaglia, interview, 1988).

Budget Implications

The district provides transportation for all magnet programs/schools at a total cost of about $21.6 million or $1,000 per student. Although magnets have increased, transportation costs have decreased because the district consolidated bus routes, according to Richard Battaglia, district specialist for student integration/traveling programs. Transportation used to run at more than $2,000 per student (Battaglia, interview, 1988).

Evaluation

According to an LAUSD integration report published in December 1987, "over the course of its existence, the magnet program has effectively improved magnet students' academic performance and attitudes toward school." (Integration Evaluation Reports: Voluntary Integration Programs 1986-87, Chapter 3, Part B: 2) At all grades, magnet student percentiles far exceeded district averages (Ibid.: 70) and students in magnets generally reported better attitudes than students in other integration programs (Ibid.). Teachers reported that to a great extent, parents of magnet students were involved in their child's education.

MILWAUKEE COUNTY INTERDISTRICT PLAN

Background

Public school choice began in Milwaukee with a 1976 federal court order that mandated desegregation. Although the court did not specify the means to integration, city minority enrollments were so high that Milwaukee could not desegregate itself without somehow involving the suburbs.

As a result, the city decided on two programs: an intradistrict choice program allowing city students to choose a neighborhood school, magnet school or any school to enhance integration; and an interdistrict choice program allowing city students to attend suburban schools (which volunteered to participate) and suburban students to attend city schools within desegregation guidelines.

In September of 1976, city school officials helped a small number of parents choose schools other than their neighborhood schools because inner-city schools were overcrowded and the new desegregation guidelines mandated integration.

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In September 1977, students in grades one through eight who were not accepted into magnet schools were asked to choose three schools for enrollment. According to city school officials, 95 percent received one of their choices and the majority of these enhanced integration.

Since that year, students entering kindergarten or exiting from the highest grade at a school have chosen their neighborhood school, a magnet school or a school where racial balance is enhanced.

Program

Magnet schools are an integral part of the Milwaukee school system. Open to all city and suburban children, the number of magnet schools grew from two high schools, two middle schools and six elementaries in 1977 to five high schools, four middle schools and 14 elementaries in 1988. Themes in these schools include:

- Open Education
- Gifted and Talented
- Teacher-pupil Learning Center
- Continuous Progress School
- Bilingual Developmental School
- Creative Arts
- Environmental Studies
- Math-Science School
- Montessori
- Individually Guided
- Language Immersion

Some neighborhood schools duplicate these themes, but are not designated as magnets.

In 1987, about 16,000 of the 95,428 city students attended magnets. (Note: In that same year, more than 32,000 left their neighborhood schools to attend other city schools.) In 1988, the city's magnets attracted half of the approximatly 1,070 suburban students attending city schools.

Originally, eight suburban districts voluntarily participated with the city in the interdistrict program, with 11 suburban students attending city schools and 323 city students attending suburban schools. In a 1987 court settlement, Milwaukee and its suburbs agreed on full suburban participation in the interdistrict program. Now suburban districts must provide space for city students and eliminate any inequitable screening procedures. Currently, 23 suburban districts are involved, with about 1,070 suburban students attending city schools and 4,300 city students attending suburban schools.

Budget Implications

The number of students participating in the interdistrict program has substantially increased. But program costs have also increased from $1,480,000 in 1976-77 to $18,493,096 last year.

Since the federal court order, the state has spent more than $65 million "double funding" the county's interdistrict program. Both the resident and nonresident districts can count students for state aid. As an incentive to accept city students, suburban districts whose nonresident enrollment exceeds 5 percent get 20 percent more state aid per student (Nelson, 1988).

State reimbursement is based on certain racial limitations. If a city minority student living in a district with a 30 percent or more minority enrollment leaves to attend a suburban school of 30 percent or less minorities, the state reimburses the suburban district for the average cost per pupil and full transportation. The city also gets to count that student for state aid as if he/she were still enrolled there. The city may accept white suburban students into districts of 30 percent or more minorities, meaning these students can attend any city school.

The city's intradistrict program allows minorities in attendance zones of 30 percent or more minority enrollment to leave for attendance areas of 30 percent or less. The city receives full state reimbursement for the movement of these students. But rising black enrollments which limited to 55\percent in the city have brought black percentages in some attendance areas above 30 percent. Black students continue school in these areas, but the state no longer pays full transportation for them; therefore placing the transportation burden on local districts. Of the total program costs, the city spent $30 million for inter- and intradistrict transportation last year. (Krieger, interview, 1988).

Evaluation

Choice observers such as Joseph Nathan question the "double funding" method of facilitating interdistrict choice because of its huge expense at a time of limited resources. Milwaukee City school officials also say interdistrict and intradistrict transportation is too expensive, citing mini-vans transporting only three or four students at a time in some cases. They note that 22 city schools are still "all black." Is the desegregation plan really effective and would the money be better spent in other areas to improve education, they ask.

To ease transportation costs, stabilize enrollments and create more control of choice, the city is considering dividing itself into three or four small attendance regions with racial balance -- 20 percent white and 65 percent black according to a recently amended federal mandate. City-wide specialty schools would remain open to all students, but other choices would be limited to schools in the resident's region.

Wisconsin Governor Thomas Thompson's proposal to allow K-6 low-income city students eligible for the federal free lunch program to attend any public school or private school in the city was defeated in the 1987-88 legislature. The bill would have directed the state to pay tuition for these students and deduct all tuition paid on their behalf from Milwaukee City state aid. (Krieger, interview, 1988).

Another proposal that failed in the 1987-88 legislature suggested the creation of districts within districts in the city's lowest-income areas. Although supported by several prominent blacks, this was fiercely opposed by the Milwaukee Public Schools, which viewed it as another kind of segregation. "That certainly would have been a great step backwards," said George Krieger, Milwaukee School District pupil database supervisor.

State and city concerns with program costs, coupled with suggestions for other approaches, imply that there may be an even further expansion of educational options in the city.

MONTCLAIR, NEW JERSEY

Background

Montclair, New Jersey, offers districtwide choice based on a magnet system originally created for desegregation.

In 1974, Montclair modified its desegregation plan to include choice according to race, space and gender guidelines. In cases of student transfers, racial balance cannot be adversely affected in the school and grade a student leaves and enters.

Program

All schools (six elementary, two middle and the high school's schools within schools) have curricular themes including arts, gifted and talented, international studies, science and technology.

Magnets have no entrance requirements other than race, space and gender considerations. In the case of waiting lists, the district established entrance criteria in this order:

1. Sibling Preference
2. Choice denied the previous year
3. Support data (discipline reports, report cards, attendance, etc.)
4. Student retention
5. Other data.

Evaluation

A 1987 evaluation of Montclair's magnets by the Educational Testing Service found that these alternatives positively affected the system in that test scores have improved, communication between parents and schools increased, and desegregation goals were met (see page 30 for more complete description of the study).

Budget Implications

When magnets were initially implemented, Montclair received federal start-up funds for their creation. But now, magnets and choice are so firmly embedded in the school system that costs have leveled off.

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MARYLAND

Background

As part of its desegregation efforts, Prince George's County offers what it calls a "School System of Choices," magnet programs throughout the public school system.

In the early 1970s the NAACP charged that the county schools were segregated and a mandatory busing plan was implemented for integration. After 15 years under this plan, the county found itself resegregated and in 1985 the NAACP came back with the segregation charge against the county. In response, the superintendent implemented the "system of choices" to achieve integration. In that year, two magnet programs were offered in 12 schools. "The county felt busing would be an artificial way to integrate the schools and the schools could easily be resegregated," said Joyce Thomas, special assistant to the superintendent for magnet schools. "The magnets offered a voluntary way of people selecting to participate in schools that were once segregated."

Program

Of the county's 175 schools, 44 currently have magnet programs which serve about 30,000 of the 102,000 county students (Thomas, interview, 1988).

These programs* include:

Academic Center
Biotechnology
Communication and Academic Studies
Comprehensive Schools
Creative and Performing Arts
Extended Day
French Immersion
Humanities and International Studies
Montessori
Science, Math and Technology
Talented and Gifted
Traditional-Classical Academy
University High School
Visual and Performing Arts

Most students are accepted into magnet programs based on interest but, because the magnet system is a desegregation vehicle, the county also established space and race guidelines for entrance. Youngsters are accepted from within and outside magnet programs' attendance areas based on the number needed to keep the schools under 80 percent minority or bring the schools' minority average closer to the county average. About 62 percent of all county students are minorities (Thomas, interview, 1988).

*** Nineteen predominantly black, non-integrated schools offer the Milliken II Program designed to enhance the quality of instruction and the potential for student advancement through compensatory resources and staffing.**

Under certain conditions, siblings of students enrolled in a magnet program receive priority at the beginning level of the magnet program. Other siblings are admitted on space availability. The county's continuing enrollment policy allows students already enrolled in a magnet program to continue automatically the next year. Continuation from elementary to middle to high school in corresponding magnet programs is also automatic as long as students successfully complete that level's program. Other restrictions may apply, including racial guidelines and space availability. ("A System of Choices," county publication, 1988).

The county provides transportation to all magnet programs. Transportation is also available within an attendance zone for eligible students.

A Committee Advisory Council on Magnet and Compensatory Educational Programs monitors and helps the county's ongoing desegregation efforts. Of the members, 10 are appointed from each of the county's nine school boards and 10 are appointed from the community at large. "The council is responsible to the Board of Education and the superintendent in an assessment of established programs, resources and future plans associated with the desegregation effort," according to "Prince George's County Public Schools: A School System of Choices," a county publication.

Budget Implications

Because of the continued creation of magnets, the general operating budget for magnet programs and schools in the county has increased from $14.1 million in 1986-87 to an estimated $23.2 million in 1988-89.

Although county projections of transportation costs show a $4 million increase since 1987, a choice program involving magnets was the most cost-effective way to achieve desegregation, said Jim Beall, Prince George's acting budget director.

Evaluation

"The school system is moving in a positive direction," says Thomas. Test scores indicate significant gains for both minorities and non-minorities.

Last year, according to the county:

*** Third graders moved into the top 30 percent nationally on the California Achievement Test by scoring at the 73rd percentile -- the first time any grade in the county's public schools surpassed the 70th percentile on the total exam.**

*** Fifth and eighth graders nearly matched the 70th percentile with systemwide scores reaching the 69th percentile in grade five and the 67th percentile in grade eight.**

*** Black students in grades three and five systemwide entered the top 40 percent nationally by surpassing the 60th percentile for the first time on the total exam. Black third graders scored at the 66th percentile, while black fifth graders matched the 61st and black eighth graders scored at the 58th percentile.**

*** Students in the Milliken II programs outpaced the countywide average and the systemwide gains of black students. As a group these students achieved best in mathematics and language with scores in the top 35 percent nationally.**

*** The system gains by black students continue to narrow the gap between white and black students throughout the system. The gap was reduced to 17 percentile points in grade three -- the first time the gap has been less than 20 percentile points.**

*** White students systemwide moved into the top 20 percent nationally at all three grade levels for the first time with white third graders at the 83rd percentile, white fifth graders at the 81st and white eighth graders at the 80th percentile.**

Highlights of Major Academic "Firsts" include:

*** Third graders enter the top 30 percent nationally.**

*** Black third and fifth graders enter top 40 percent nationally.**

*** The gap between white and black third graders falls below 20 percentile points.**

*** White students in grades three, five and eight enter the top 20 percent nationally.**

*** All middle schools rank above the national average.**

*** Third graders top national norm by 23 percentile points.**

*** Fifth graders top national norm by 19 percentile points.**

*** Eighth graders top national norm by 18 percentile points.**

According to a 1986-87 county evaluation of magnet and Milliken II Programs, the county found positive changes in programs, students, parents and staff since the implementation of the programs. *

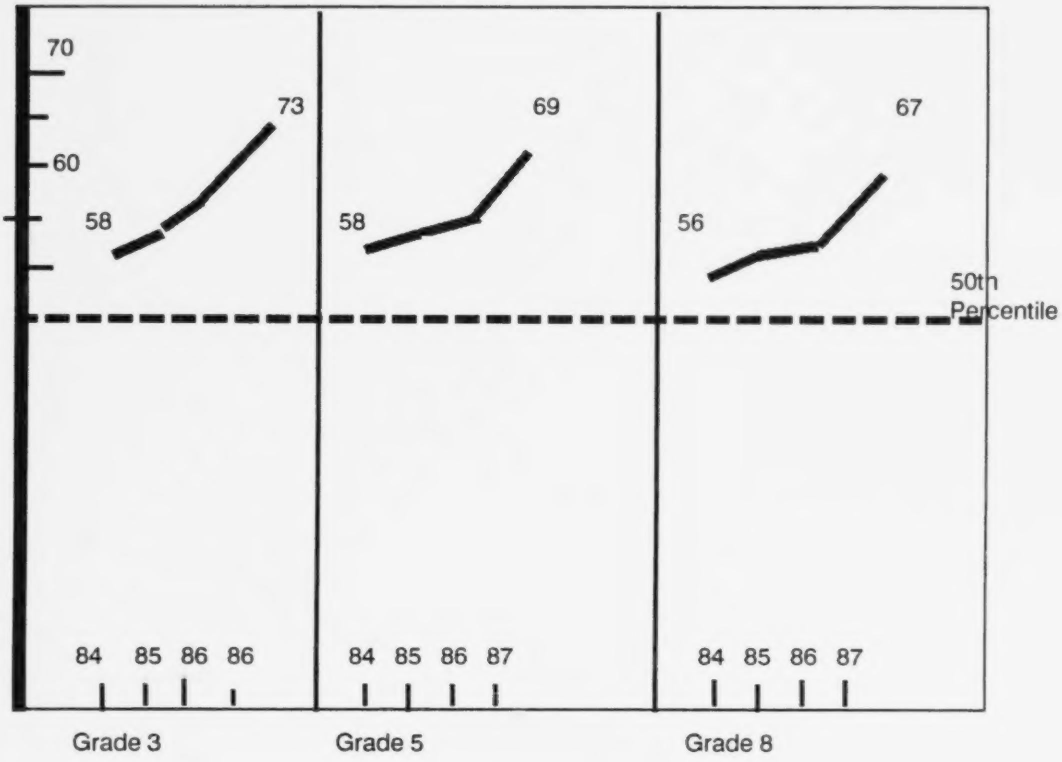
Generally, the evaluation came to the following conclusions:

*** Parents of students from all of the specialty schools perceive positive changes in their child's schooling because of their school receiving Milliken II resources or adopting a Magnet program.**

***Source:Magnet and Milliken II Programs Evaluation Report 1986-87 School Year, prepared by the Program Review Office, Department of Evaluation and Research, Prince George's County Public Schools, Upper Marlboro, Maryland.**

TABLE 2.1

Student Achievement Improves Prince George's County P ublic Schools



California Achievement Test

Source: Prince George's County, MD.

- **Parents of students participating in the specialty schools (including Milliken II) are satisfied with several important areas of their children's school experience, particularly those related to increased opportunities for students to learn and students' improved attitudes toward school.**
- **School staffs are aware and agree with the educational goal of the specialty programs in their schools.**
- **Principals, for the most part, agree that the needed resources and program support to implement their adopted specialty program have been delivered.**
- **Program teachers agree that most of the significant components of their programs' specialty curriculum are being implemented in the classroom.**
- **Student participants of the specialty programs are said to have more opportunities to learn, appear to be more highly motivated, and have more positive attitudes toward school, according to more than 50 percent of the program teachers.**

The evaluation cited positive changes in the following specific areas:

Programs:
The results of a teachers survey indicate that Milliken II resources and magnet program implementation have had a positive programmatic impact their school by creating more opportunities for student to learn, higher expectations for student achievement, more support services and new/better instructional materials.

Students:
The survey also showed that teachers saw positive student changes for program participants in that student achievement has improved, students appear to be highly motivated and have a more positive attitude toward school.

Parents:
Teachers perceived positive parent changes in that they provided greater support for student learning and are more involved in school-level decisions.

Staff:
Teachers found positive staff changes in attitude and morale because of program implementation.

RICHMOND, CALIFORNIA

Background

The 110-square mile district of Richmond, California in the San Francisco Bay area is in the process of instituting district-wide choice through the conversion of all schools into magnets with special themes.

The "System for Choices" program, which began in 1988-89, will be completed by 1991-92 with choice at every level.

Program

Curriculum specialties include classical studies, futures, gifted/talented, international, Montessori, university and language.

Currently, 24 of 38 elementary, one middle and two high schools are schools of choice. Modeled after Montclair, New Jersey's all-magnet system of choice, the restructuring in Richmond is headed by former Montclair superintendent Walter Marks, now Richmond superintendent.

First priority goes to students who live in the attendance zone of the school of their choice. Transfers are available for those wishing to attend schools outside their attendance zones. All incoming students must choose a school.

All of these transfers are based on race and space guidelines, interest and academic performance. As part of an existing integration program, any movement in schools with high minority populations must improve racial integration.

Currently in its first year, the implementation of choice allowed 2,194 students to choose and be admitted to a school. By 1991-92, more than 28,000 students will have the option to choose a school. Many parents are taking a "wait and see" attitude while new speciality schools are being created, according to Al Nicora, county director of administrative services.

Formally, transportation is available for special education and career development center students. All other students use public transportation if needed.

Budget Implications

Transportation is now available for Adams Middle School and high school specialty programs at Kennedy and El Cerrito. This has caused a district bill of more than $500,000 for students living more than 3 miles from these schools. (Nicora, Interview, 1988)

Evaluation

In its first year, the program is too new to evaluate.

ROCHESTER, NEW YORK

Background

Magnet schools began in Rochester in 1978 at the elementary level. In 1980, the district adopted a voluntary desegregation plan including elementary and secondary magnets, an open enrollment policy and an urban- suburban transfer program.

The open enrollment option was created for elementary students in the southwest section of the city because there was no established middle school for them. Today, open enrollment is still limited to this section for this purpose.

School officials say the urban-suburban transfer option has been available for more than 20 years, but was worked into the 1978 desegregation plan as a way to voluntarily enhance integration by involving the suburbs.

Over the years, the district's magnet programs have grown from three independent magnet schools in one building in 1978 to five magnet middle schools and five magnet high schools in 1988.

In 1987, the district began a five-year restructuring plan because parents and the community in general wanted a better mechanism to serve middle schoolers. The result was expansion of options at the middle school level to five magnet schools and three comprehensive schools. (Three magnet schools at the middle level are independent schools within one school building.)

The choice option was already embedded in the district's desegregation plan through magnets, so school officials decided to incorporate choice into the restructuring plan by eliminating attendance zones at the high school level.

Program

Currently the district operates magnet programs in 17 of its 36 elementary schools and magnets serve 42 percent of the 18,505 elementary students. Elementary school themes are duplicated throughout the district to open programs to all students regardless of race, but this limits choice at this level, according to the district's 1987-88 district Final Report on Magnets.

Children entering middle schools may be assigned to their neighborhood school or select a magnet school where acceptance is based on race and space guidelines. There are eight options at this level. The average size of a middle school is 300 students.

As of 1988-89, choice became mandatory at the high school level as part of the restructuring plan. Eighth graders must select three schools from among these 12 options:

East High School
Franklin High School
Marshall High School
Edison Technical and Occupational Education Center
Bioscience Academy at Franklin High School
Communication Arts Magnet at Franklin High School
The Business Magnet at Franklin High School
Law and Government Magnet at Marshall High School
School of the Arts at Monroe
School Without Walls
Academy of Excellence at Wilson
Science and Technology Magnet at Wilson

Placement is based on racial and academic balance and space availability. Average school size at this level is 500-600 students.

In 1988-89, 81 percent of all eighth graders received their first choice and 100 percent received one of their three choices (Strollo, interview, 1988).

Five suburban districts participate with the city in the urban-suburban transfer option. Based on race and space guidelines, non-minority city students may apply to any city school that is participating in the program. In 1988, about 1,050 city students attended suburban schools and 200 suburban students attended city schools. More than 90 percent of the suburban students attended magnets.

Because of the magnets, suburban applications have increased. In some cases, the city has rejected suburban students' applications because schools did not have vacancies. City students receive placement priority.

Budget Implications

Although district transportation costs have increased since the 1987 restructuring plan was implemented, district officials say the choice option has saved money.

"By consolidating relatively small programs, we were able to utilize our teaching staff and space better," said Paul Strollo, district supervising director of project management and grants.

Evaluation

According to the district's 1987-88 Final Report on Magnet Schools, "magnet programs have proved to be effective vehicles for reducing racial isolation at target schools" for the past eight years (Final Report, Rochester City School District Magnet Schools 1987-88:13)

The impact of choice in schooling has been so successful that the district has redesigned its entire structure to adopt the magnet school concept of choice into all of its middle and secondary schools (Ibid.)

ST. LOUIS AND CHOICE

While some positive things are happening in St. Louis, Missouri, it is also an illustration of some of the worst problems that can develop in a choice program, says choice observer Joseph Nathan.

Background

The city first began its desegregation efforts in 1976 by supporting a few magnet schools for desegregation. In 1981, a federal court order established a city intradistrict magnet program and directed the state to pay 50 percent of the city's magnet school specialty costs and program costs in non-integrated schools. City schools remained mostly black (La Pierre, 1988: 34).

After more than a decade of litigation on the segregation issue, a settlement agreement was reached in 1983 allowing the voluntary interdistrict transfer of suburban and city students for desegregation. The provisions of the agreement were actualized by court orders throughout the following years mandating quality education programs, the suburban-city transfer option, more magnet schools and capital improvements.

Program

The interdistrict (suburban-city) transfer option targets up to 15,000 students to transfer from the city to suburbs, suburbs to city and suburbs to suburbs. Under the agreement, 117 schools in 16 suburban districts must accept black city students to increase minority enrollments by 15 percent or achieve a 25 percent minority enrollment. It is important to note that suburban districts can refuse to admit St. Louis City students who have been discipline problems. Desegregation goals for city schools are 55 percent black students with a 5 percent margin (Spradling, interview, 1988)

Twenty-five magnet schools are supposed to attract suburban students by their specialty programs. Included in the 1983 settlement agreement was a long-range magnet plan to create more magnets for a total of 27 by 1992-93. At the time of the agreement, there were 24 magnets designed to attract 6,000 suburban students. The integration goal was amended in summer 1988 to 1,640 suburban students in city magnets. Currently, only 600 suburban students are enrolled along with 7,400 city students. Magnet school enrollments this year total more than 92 percent black (Spradling, interview, 1988).

Last fall, 11,131 city students and 552 suburban participated in the program, leaving the city 76.53 percent black and 23.47 percent white and two suburban districts less than 15 percent black. In the fall of 1982, before the program began, the city was 79 percent black and 21 percent white, while 10 suburban districts were less than 15 percent black and six were less than 25 percent black (Spradling, interview, 1988).

Budget Implications

Aside from poor integration figures, the success of this program is even more questionable considering its enormous transportation and magnet costs.

The state supports most of the program costs by paying 100 percent for transportation, full tuition to the nonresident district and half state aid to the resident district. It also pays for magnet specialization and operational costs for additional magnets under the plan. Last year, the state paid a total of $94.2 million of the city's $135 million desegregation budget. About $20 million in state money was spent for transportation by bus or taxi in the suburban-city transfer. Transporting a city student to the suburbs costs an average of $1,700 and more than $3,500 for suburban students into the cities. (Ibid.)

Magnet costs average 42 percent more per student than traditional schools at the elementary, 25 percent at the middle and 27 percent at the secondary levels, ranging from about $6,000 to more than $7,600 throughout the system.

As part of capital improvement plan for city school buildings designated in the settlement, the federal court ordered in September 1987 a $114.718 million capital improvement budget with the state paying 50 percent or $57.359 million. To date the state has only funded $3 million for capital improvements since the fall 1987. As part of this action, the court ordered that the state also pay 100 percent for capital improvements in enrollment crunches. Seven districts have requested a total of $49 million for improvements, two of which received a cumulative $1 million this year (Spradling, interview. 1988).

A new order was also issued in summer 1988 for $51 million in capital improvements in the magnets with the state paying 71.5 percent or $36 million. The state has paid only $13 million for these improvements this year (Spradling, interview, 1988).

Officials estimate that the state will pay $180 million for operating costs for the transfer program this year (Spradling, interview, 1988).

Evaluation

"The principal problem" with the interdistrict transfer option is that it is basically a "one-way system" wrote D. Bruce La Pierre, a professor of constitutional law at Washington University School of Law and author of St. Louis' original voluntary interdistrict plan (La Pierre, 1988:40). The only real success in St. Louis is black city students moving into suburban schools. The settlement agreement is failing because suburban participants are so few, according to James DeClue, president of the St. Louis branch of the NAACP and an active participant in the desegregation case since its original filing (DeClue, 1988:46).

Although city magnets attract some suburban students, they are not retaining them. Interdistrict choice programs designed for integration are supposed to bring suburban students into city schools and retain them, but each year at least 40 percent of St. Louis' suburban students return to suburban schools after having attended city magnets. The failure of magnets to attract and retain many suburban students is due to their failure to provide the "high quality programs they advertise" (La Pierre, 1988: 40).

When evaluating St. Louis' efforts, observers question the program's excessive costs and the extent of choice. About 17,000 students choose schools under the plan last year, but program costs were enormous (Spradling, interview, 1988).

Researchers also cite dilapidated city school buildings in need of repair while the state spends millions for transportation in the transfer.

Especially disturbing is the fact that although extensive capital improvements were included in the court settlement, the implementation has been "a complete failure" (La Pierre, 1988: 42). Close to none was made.

THE NEW IMPROVED SORTING MACHINE: A RECENT STUDY

Cambridge, Lowell, and Fall River, Massachusetts, New York City's East Harlem District 4 and Montclair, New Jersey are the only school systems to date that have created public school choice systems by designating every school as a magnet or specialty school.

Most often, districts create a few magnets targeting certain groups for racial or ethnic desegregation, while maintaining neighborhood schools zoned for attendance. Most magnets have some kind of admissions policies if only to guarantee desegregation. The effects of academically selective school admissions criteria in a choice system have been questioned by researchers .

In a two-year study (preliminary report released April 1988) of Chicago, Philadelphia*· Boston and New York's school systems, Suzanne Davenport and Donald R. Moore concentrated on admission to selective versus non-selective high schools. Davenport and Moore found a six-tier school system in these cities.

Schools in the upper tiers "operate as separate virtually private schools, while those at the bottom tier, catering almost exclusively to low-income students, provide essentially custodial care" (Davenport and Moore, The New Improved Sorting Machine, Designs for Change, Chicago, 1988).

Six Tier High School Systems:

Schools highest on the tier admit the highest scoring students based on competitive exams. Boston has 3 exam schools, Philadelphia 2, Chicago 2, New York 4. (Davenport and Moore, 1988: 3b-3c)

Selective magnet schools sometimes have admissions requirements that rival those of exam schools.

Selective vocational schools often have academic requirements less stringent than selective magnets.

The last three types of schools on the tier are non-selective moderate, moderate-low and low-income schools that have minimal or no selection criteria. These schools serve 50 to 70 percent of all students in the systems studied by Davenport and Moore. Schools with the lowest-income students are predominantly black or Hispanic.

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* Philadelphia public schools have an extensive magnet program offering more than 100 schools or special programs from which to choose. Students who are not accepted into the magnets attend their neighborhood schools. Students can attend any magnet school in the district as long as the student meets entrance criteria and does not upset the racial balance of the school.

Davenport and Moore found that certain qualities of selective magnet schools and programs can negatively affect the functioning of non-selective schools.

1. **Selective schools attract the most successful students, often leaving non-selective schools to deal with the most serious learning problems.**

2. **Selective schools are often granted special prerogatives to select staff that are not allowed to neighborhood schools.**

3. **Selective schools are often given extra resources and increased flexibility in using them. These schools most likely have better and more attractive facilities than non-selective schools.**

4. **Because they have specific enrollment limits, these schools are able to plan more effectively.**

5. **Students who "don't work out" in selective schools are often sent back to neighborhood schools.**

6. **"Because selective schools create a "system-wide" focus on high achievers, non-selective schools are forced to compete for these students to enhance their own reputation rather than improving education for the majority of students in the system." (Davenport and Moore, 1988)**

7. **Lastly, educators tend to see students not accepted into selective schools (unless they attend an exceptional neighborhood high school) (Davenport and Moore, 1988: 10) as "losers, uneducable and not deserving to be educated." Students, in turn, often feel this way about themselves. (Davenport, interview, 1988)**

Among their recommendations, Davenport and Moore suggest that students should have the right to apply to a selective school based on their interests. The enrollment of these schools should mirror the makeup of the city.

Schools should have to justify entrance requirements and keep them at a minimum, randomly choosing from minimally qualified students.

This study shows that monitoring of choice systems involving specialty schools is crucial to ensure equity. If schools are allowed free reign in admission criteria, academic and racial segregation may result. For low-income students, choice based on selective schools may hurt educationally and emotionally by grouping them as undesirable students in undersirable schools.

EFFECTIVENESS OF MAGNETS ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND DESEGREGATION

When properly designed, magnets have provided high quality education in urban school districts, according to the findings of a "Survey of Magnet Schools: Analyzing a Model for Quality Integrated Education," (a two-year study of the effectiveness and status of magnet schools prepared by James H. Lowry and Associates, September 1983). One-third of the 45 magnets used in 15 urban school districts in the survey received high ratings in instructional quality, curriculum design, student-teacher interaction, student learning, and use of resources.

High quality magnets do not require highly selective methods of student admission, the study found. The magnets served average- as well as high- ability students. Only 14 of 45 magnets used achievement test scores, grade point averages or other highly selective admittance standards.

Of the 32 magnet schools that reported achievement test scores, 40 percent had average reading and math achievement scores 10 points above their district averages. Twenty percent had average scores 30 points higher than district averages for the grade level. (Survey of Magnet Schools, 1983).

Average daily attendance, dropout, suspension and transfer rates show that magnets have more positive outcomes than district averages, which may be a function of voluntary enrollment and self-selection.

Researchers found that magnet school achievement is strongly related to the innovative leadership of the school principal, (Survey of Magnet Schools, 1983:28) a high degree of coherence of the theme, teaching styles, and staff to form a strong program identify and district commitment. Magnet programs received slightly more funding over the two-year period.

Districts with high quality ratings for their magnet schools also frequently had a high level of community involvement from parents, businesses, universities and community organizations. Involvement ranged from program planning and design to writing curriculum, providing part-time teachers and arranging for special equipment or facilities.

The analysis states that 40 percent of urban districts which develop magnet schools as a means to desegregation have positive results. Full racial and ethnic desegregation was achieved in two-thirds of the magnets. The remainder were districts in which desegregation was not a program objective.

A 1987 evaluation of the all-magnet system in New Jersey's Montclair School District by the Educational Testing Service found that the Iowa Test of Basic Skills showed an improvement in academic performance since the implementation of a magnet program. Both black and white students were performing above the national average.

The magnets created a "good learning environment in which students of diverse backgrounds feel comfortable and are able to learn. We found evidence of strong leadership, happy students, and generally satisfied teachers." (Educational Testing service, Montclair, 1987:ii)

The impact of creating alternatives within the public school system was positive and added excitement to the schools, researchers wrote.

Montclair parents liked the idea of choice. Communications increased between parents and the schools through involvement in the "school, PTA, school review committee and other volunteer efforts."

As often associated with magnets, some parents perceived unequal resources in the schools. Black parents expressed concerns about achievement gaps between black and white students, underrepresentation of blacks in high school honors classes and a lack of attention to raising minority scores in Basic Skills Improvement Plans. (Educational Testing Service, 1987).

Montclair achieved its desegregation goals. The schools and classrooms were racially balanced. ETS found that the magnets created an integrated environment. A weakness in the system was that a greater number of minorities were present in compensatory education classes and fewer minorities were in honors classes. Encouragement of minority enrollment in advanced classes increased their representation in this area.

A 1984 study of New York State's 41 magnet schools in eight districts (state or federally funded) by MAGI Educational Services Inc. found that New York's magnets provide quality education and promote racial/ethnic balance.

In summary, the report found that State Pupil Evaluation Programs test results revealed statistically significant increases in student performance after the introduction of magnet schools in the mid 1970s. These improvements were not because of changes in racial composition or selective enrollment patterns, the report stated. The majority of magnets had higher achievement test scores than their district averages. Fifty-eight percent performed better in reading while 65 percent were better in math. Nearly one-quarter surpassed their district averages by more than 10 normal curve equivalent points, a statistically and educationally important difference (MAGI Educational Services, New York State Magnet School Research Study Final Report, 1984).

Research indicates that magnets encouraged students' interest in learning. Ninety-eight percent had higher attendance rates than their district averages. Nearly three-quarters had dropout rates below the district averages. (MAGI Educational Services, 1984).

Magnets had a strong program identity, with clear goals and a rich curriculum that offered choice and diversity to parents and students (MAGI Educational Services, 1984).

Parent participation in magnets was exceptionally high. In nearly half of the magnets, 50 percent or more parents regularly participated in school activities. In 30 percent, three-quarters or more parents were active participants. Ninety-eight percent of the parents said they were satisfied or very satisfied with magnets. The same percentage said they would recommend their magnets to other parents and the majority perceived that the magnets provided a better education than other schools. (MAGI Educational Services, 1984).

Magnets had positive school climates with strong leadership, cohesiveness, teacher-directed learning and sound working relationships. They were characterized by high levels of communication. Magnet teachers were confident in their schools and in the concept of magnets. Teacher turnover rates were low and 80 percent of teachers rated their magnets as superior to non-magnets. More than 90 percent said magnets successfully met the needs of students for whom they were intended. (MAGI Educational Services, 1984).

Magnets reduced racial isolation in that high minority schools' average minority enrollments dropped to 54 percent in 1983 from 90 percent in 1973. Low minority schools' average minority enrollment increased by 26 percent in 1983 from 28 percent in 1973. The current racial composition in magnets reflected the district-wide average at the time of the study despite large discrepencies before magnet implementation. (MAGI Educational Services, 1984).

POSITIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF MAGNET SCHOOLS

Robert Arnove and Toby Strout of Indiana University's School of Education wrote that "the element of choice is important. In most cases, along with the right to choose a program has come the opportunity to participate in some degree in the design, operation and evaluation of the programs" (Arnove and Strout, 1977/1978: 2-4). Magnets that include parents in the decision-making process have made them more "amenable to the desegregation process," according to Arnove and Strout.

Proponents argue that not only do parents become more involved in the schools, but community and business leaders share their expertise with students through lectures, work opportunities or field trips related to magnet themes.

Some magnet school systems allow teachers to choose their schools. Teachers who choose the magnet school in which they teach are more likely to be interested in the academic theme of the school and hopefully play a leadership role in the design and implementation of a thematic curriculum.

Some experts say options provide better matches of students' interests with educational programs. Smaller numbers in magnet programs allow a more personalized education. Magnet school teachers say they have developed relationships with students which have given them a greater understanding of students' needs and learning styles. (Raywid, 1984).

A family atmosphere often develops in these schools which leads to greater collegiality among students, teachers, administrators, parents and the community. (Ibid.)

Magnets have also been linked with reduced school violence and vandalism, improved pupil attendance and more positive student attitudes toward school (News In Brief, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, 1988, U.S. Department of Education).

NEGATIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF MAGNET SCHOOLS

By their nature, magnet schools can also create problems in a public school choice system.

Some magnets establish entrance requirements because the demand for admission is so great. However, research studies indicate this limits choice to only certain children. Requirements including prior achievement, conduct and demonstrated interest largely limit programs to white middle-class students (Arnove and Strout, 1978). Research shows that minorities and low-income students can increase their academic achievement through magnet programs but (if they are denied access) there is little chance for improvement (Nathan, interview, June 28, 1988).

Selective magnets can be elitist schools. Academic magnets such as science, math or technology may "cream off" top students from other schools and weaken academic balances. Sometimes, magnets are selective simply by the nature of their themes.

Magnets can be extremely costly and may drain the resources of other schools, stripping them of their educational resources.

Magnet school teachers may have to be retrained to teach the theme, which can strain budgets and evoke negative feelings for those teachers who have no interest in the magnet.

If teachers are allowed to choose the school in which they want to teach, controversy may result if teacher placement is largely based on seniority, but not necessarily on capability.

The paperwork involved with choice can become an administrative burden and may be costly if additional personnel are hired.

Sometimes magnet school themes are not actualized because of poor planning, haste or lack of resources. Themes in a choice plan must be actualized. Choice cannot exist unless schools differ, offering an array of programs from which to choose (Raywid, Educational Options Conference, 1988).

Racial resegregation may occur unless a magnet system is strictly monitored. In some districts, school buildings housing several magnets became more racially integrated, but actual classes were more segregated (Arnove and Strout, 1977).

While many districts use magnets and choice as tools to try to achieve racial desegregation, others are using parental choice in a greater variety of ways. Among these are choice to achieve program quality, involve parents more directly in the schools and to provide greater competition between schools.

TABLE 2.2

SUMMARY OF ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF MAGNET SCHOOLS

Advantages:

- Diverse magnet programs can provide choice for parents and students.
- Choice may lead to greater parent involvement in program design and implementation.
- Community and business leaders can be valuable resources for magnets by provision of guest speakers, equipment and community- based learning.
- Smaller schools can lead to a more personalized education, closer teacher-student relationships and a greater sense of community.
- Better matches between curricular focus and student needs are possible.
- School-based reform is more likely to occur if teachers choose a school and play a leadership role in curricular design and program implementation.
- Successful magnets have a strong program identity with clear goals.
- Students in magnet schools often achieve at a level that surpasses the district average.
- Communication between parents and schools increased through parent involvement in school committees and efforts.
- Magnets promote racial and ethnic balance.
- Magnets often report higher attendance rates and lower dropout rates compared to district averages.
- Positive school climates, strong leadership, cohesiveness and sound working relationships are found in magnets.
- Teacher turnover rates were low.
- More opportunities for educators to carry out their ideas and philosophy are found in magnets.

Disadvantages:

- Magnets with entrance requirements limit choice.
- Magnets can become elitist schools -- creaming off top students or athletes.
- High costs are often associated with magnets for program implementation, equipment and retraining teachers.
- Bussing must be reworked and may be more costly.
- Magnets may drain the resources of other schools and create inequity with neighborhood schools.
- Teacher choice of schools may be controversial and difficult to handle at the administrative level.
- Paperwork associated with choice can be an administrative burden and costly if additional personnel are hired.
- Themes may not be actualized, thus defeating the purpose of a true choice system.
- Without proper controls, schools may become racially resegregated. Maintaining parental choice and desegregation may be difficult.

CHAPTER THREE

CHOICE PROGRAMS AROUND THE NATION

At least forty of 50 states have some kind of choice programs at the district level (Nathan, interview, 1988). Nearly half of the state governments in the nation to date have either taken action or are discussing implementation of choice plans. Most states allow options among only public schools, but help support private and non-sectarian programs. Some also include options for secondary students to attend post-secondary institutions for high school or college credit. Others target specific groups including dropouts, pregnant teens or unsuccessful high school students. Some plans allow students to cross district lines, while others are limited to movement within a district.

OVERVIEW OF STATES CONSIDERING OR USING CHOICE

The following describes choice programs or proposals throughout the country. Some of these programs are unsuccessful in the opinion of educators or researchers, but others have shown positive results.*

ALASKA

Alaska high schoolers in tiny villages can attend school in their own town or go to a state-operated residential school in the community of Sitka.

ARIZONA

Arizona high school juniors and seniors can take courses for high school credit at post-secondary institutions. Colleges can set admissions requirements, but no other restrictions apply. Costs are assumed by pupils or the institution receives state aid for the student. High schools lose state aid.

The legislature in 1988 passed a bill repealing tuition payment requirements for interdistrict choice, but it failed in the senate. The bill included the following exceptions: resident districts would have had to pay special education costs to nonresident districts; court-ordered desegregation districts would not have had to accept students if the districts' racial balances were altered; and districts with enrollments to capacity could have refused entrance to students.

The bill contained no racial guidelines other than the above provisions for court-ordered or administrative agreement desegregation plans. State aid would have followed students to nonresident districts with local taxes remaining in the resident district. No transportation funds were included.

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*Choice observer and coordinator of the NGA Time For Results: The Governors 1991 Report on Education Joe Nathan was extremely instrumental in providing a framework for research in this chapter.

ARKANSAS

In October, 1988 Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton proposed that the legislature consider adopting a K-12 interdistrict choice program similar to Minnesota's Enrollments Option program. Clinton suggested allowing students to attend nonresident districts with state aid following as long as racial balance is maintained. Nate Coulter, assistant legal counsel to the governor, expects a bill draft to be completed by the end of 1988.

CALIFORNIA

A bill passed in 1987 allows California K-6 students to attend school in districts where their parents work as long as no negative impact on desegregation results.

The state also provides funds to help school districts establish the following public school alternative programs, all of which are available through an interdistrict transfer as long as racial balance is maintained.

* State grants established under a 1985 dropout prevention and recovery bill provide more than $5 million for alternatives targeting high-risk students -- alternative work centers and educational clinics. Most of these alternatives are schools within schools.

* Alternative education and work centers were funded by the bill for high-risk 14- to 22-year-olds who have been truant for 45 days or more. Of California's 1,000 school districts, 50 have such centers.

* Also in the dropout bill were funds for educational clinics ($2 million in 1988-89) to prepare the most difficult dropouts for employment, further education or a general education diploma. Currently 10 clinics serve about 4,000 students a year.

* Twenty specialized schools of technology, science or the arts for highly talented students were established with state grants varying from $25,000 to $500,000. All are schools within schools; the exeception is a performing and visual arts high school. Two million dollars in state funds were earmarked for specialized schools in 1988-89.

* Eighteen Partnership Academies in 16 districts were established for tenth- to twelfth-grade potential dropouts as preparation for employment in above-entry-level positions. These academies serve 1,600 students, but state department officials expect them to grow.

* The state also partially funds ($115 million in 1988-89) more than 400 alternative continuation high schools for older, work-oriented 16 to 18-year-olds who want a small school atmosphere. Every district has the option to create a continuation school.

* State-funded ($935,000 in 1986-87) opportunity schools for truant and potentially truant junior high schoolers are available as temporary treatments until they can return to regular schools.

> Most of these are classes rather than individual schools; and although the state only funds them at the junior high level, opportunity programs may be K-12.

A failed 1987-88 proposal to allow state funds for teachers to establish their own schools if 30 or more parents wanted to send their children to these schools will be reintroduced in the state's next legislative session. Although the proposed bill passed the assembly and state policy committees, it died in the senate (Hartzler, interview, 1988).

COLORADO

In Colorado unsuccessful public high schoolers can attend another school in their resident district or another district if both boards of education agree.

A bill sponsored by Representative Richard Bond passed on May 24, 1988 carrying a post-secondary options provision. Eleventh and twelfth graders may attend college classes as long as the courses meet high school graduation requirements. Districts and post-secondary institutions must agree on a funding method. Students can obtain high school or college credit or both.

A failed 1988 choice bill which would have mandated acceptance of nonresident students in public schools outside their district of residence was met with intense opposition, especially by local school boards which saw it as an attack on local control. The bill, which proposed intra- and interdistrict choice regardless of attendance boundaries, included transportation to the border of the nonresident district, but no desegregation or racial guidelines.

CONNECTICUT

Connecticut State officials want to stimulate high quality education by combining desegregation and interdistrict choice. Cumulatively, 14 districts in the state contain 78.8 percent of all minorities, most of which are low-income people. (Williams, interview, 1988) It is difficult to racially mix children in the cities; therefore, cross district choice is the state approach to desegregation. The state is providing grants as incentives for participation.

Interdistrict state grants established three years ago to aid districts with declining enrollments have been amended to provide funds in 1988-89 for districts to develop interdistrict schools of choice to enhance integration. As many as 60 districts are involved in nine programs this year. Five programs will receive up to $30,000 each for planning and four others will receive up to $70,000 for implementation.

The state is also considering using existing construction grants to fund schools for desegregation efforts between two or more districts or within a district. Empty state college and university buildings are also possibilities for new school sites.

At least six Connecticut state Department visits to districts with magnets or schools of choice are planned to weigh the benefits of funding similar programs for desegregation efforts.

FLORIDA

Florida provides financial incentives for community colleges to accept high school students for dual credit. High schools and community colleges both count student participants for state funds, but the state weighs the college's full-time equivalent funding by one-fourth per high school student.

The college board of trustees and local high school board must agree on the program and establish college admissions criteria. Students in the dual credit program rose from 5,667 in 1982-83, when incentives were first available in the form of textbook reimbursement, to 8,701 in 1986-87 according to the latest state reports. Educational policy officials say this program may have inspired students who were bored or needed to be challenged to remain in school. High school students had higher grades in college than freshmen. (Atherton, interview, 1988)

ILLINOIS

In fall 1988, Illinois Governor James Thompson inserted a provision into the Chicago reform legislation instructing that city to study and develop incentive programs allowing families to apply for enrollment in any attendance zone in a district or subdistrict. The legislature must review and adopt this before it is implemented.

IOWA

Under the "Lakota Bill," passed by the Iowa General Assembly in 1985, parents can appeal to the state board of education if they think their children are not getting an appropriate education in their resident district. If the state board agrees, it can order the local board to make other arrangements, including paying tuition to a neighboring district.

A tuition tax credit/deduction program was approved by the 1987 legislature allowing up to $1,000 for private school tuition for parents who itemize deductible expenses on their tax returns. Those who do not itemize may receive tax credits up to $50 per child enrolled in private schools. The Des Moines Public School District filed a challenge to this system. A trial has been scheduled for the first week of February, 1989 (Remsburg, interview, 1988).

An open enrollment option approved in spring 1988 and effective July 1, 1990 will allow secondary students to take a course or set of courses in another district if they are not available in the resident district. They must present their case to the local school board, which then will decide on student movement. Students will pay tuition in the nonresident district with state aid following and local funds remaining in the resident district.

State Director of Education William Lepley is currently reviewing Minnesota law and considering the inclusion of cross-district choice at secondary level in Iowa. Lepley is expected to make recommendations to the governor in January 1989 (Gross, interview, 1988).

LOUISIANA

Louisiana funds a state public residential high school for math, science and art. Located in Natchitoches, the school was founded in 1983 and is funded mostly by the state.

MAINE

Maine high schoolers can take college courses for credit if the school board approves. This 1987 post-secondary options program was modeled after the Minnesota plan.

MASSACHUSETTS

Massachusetts allocates funds to help districts develop different schools within districts for more effective racial integration and student achievement. More than $35 million has been spent on this. Massachusetts also funds urban students to attend suburban school.

Governor Michael Dukakis vetoed a bill allowing movement between cities and suburbs with no race guidelines. The Department of Education is developing a new plan.

A full description of choice in Massachusetts follows later in this chapter.

MICHIGAN

After two failed choice bills, a third will be introduced in the Michigan legislature this year proposing interdistrict choice with state funds following students and intradistrict choice which, by a local majority vote, would allow choice in a district where two or more schools serve the same grade level (Dombrowksi, interview, 1988).

MINNESOTA

Minnesota high school juniors and seniors can take non-sectarian courses in public and private colleges and universities and public vocational-technical schools. Tax dollars follow students who may earn high school or post-secondary credits.

The state's Open Enrollment Options Program was the first adopted in the country to allow student choice in any public school in the state at the secondary level as long as the receiving district has room and movement does not harm desegregation efforts. State aid follows students. A full examination of choice in Minnesota follows later in this chapter.

MISSISSIPPI

The 1987 Mississippi legislature appropriated $313,000 for planning a two-year state residential school of math and science for high school juniors and seniors.

Currently in its first year of operation, the Mississippi School for Math and Science is housed on the campus of the Mississippi University of Women in Columbus. Before it opened, the local county board of supervisors gave $1.5 million to renovate older facilities on the campus. The school now enrolls 136 high school juniors with 135 more juniors to be admitted next year for a total enrollment of more than 270.

The school's current budget is $2,067,000 in state funds. It has requested $2.8 million for the 1989-90 school year. Students do not pay tuition (Franklin, interview, 1988).

NEW JERSEY

As mentioned in the introduction, New Jersey has undertaken the study of public school to provide a basis for discussion throughout the state. Although this study did not target New Jersey for specific applications of choice, some districts in the state do use choice to some extent. While Montclair is nationally known for its use of choice, Atlantic City is also an excellent example of open enrollment.

For the past 13 years, parents in Atlantic City could select any one of seven elementary schools in the district. Open enrollment has brought about the movement of 15 percent of the district's approximately 3,500 students to schools outside their neighborhood. Two of the seven schools, Westside and Uptown, are located in open space facilities which feature large rooms without walls. The centerpiece of this system is Uptown which was built in 1977 and now has an enrollment of approximately 590 students. A wing will expand student capacity to 1,000 when completed. Uptown School is a part of Uptown Complex, which includes community medical and recreational facilities. The other schools in the system each have unique characteristics but are not designed as magnets or specialty schools.

NEW YORK

New York's choice efforts are largely at the local level. The state helped fund development of magnet programs in a number of cities and also provided funds to help local districts develop intradistrict public school choice programs.

Test scores have dramatically improved in New York City's Community District 4 since 1973 when the district abolished attendance zones and created schools within a single school building to allow student choice at the elementary and junior high levels. This open market atmosphere has inspired innovative programs to attract students. Three schools closed and later reopened with new programs to entice higher enrollments. A full description of Community District 4 follows later in this chapter.

District 2, a diverse community of Chinese, Hispanic, black and white students, plans to offer choice among its 30 elementary and junior high schools in midtown and lower Manhattan under District Superintendent Anthony Alvarado who helped develop the District 4 plan when he was there.

NORTH CAROLINA

North Carolina supports a state public residential math and science high school for 400 academically talented eleventh and twelfth graders. Without sacrificing admissions standards, the school enrolls an equal number of students from each of the state's 11 congressional districts.

VERMONT

Vermont allows parents in rural districts that do not provide secondary education to choose a public or private non-sectarian secondary school.

In 1989 selected high school seniors may attend the Vermont Academy of Science and Technology (VAST) for high school and college credit. Part of Vermont Technical College, this academy will accept 30 students on the basis of their interest and aptitude in science and math.

The school is partly funded by a $210,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Education's Fund for Improvement of Post-Secondary Education. Participating students will pay a college tuition of $6,800. They may also apply for financial aid. Although local school boards are not mandated to contribute funds for the program, they are encouraged to voluntarily transfer state aid for participating students. (Hastings, interview 1988).

VIRGINIA

Virginia supports several regional math and science magnet public schools designed to experiment with new ideas and to challenge gifted students and others dissatisfied with programs in their districts.

WASHINGTON

Washington supports eight educational clinics run by private non-sectarian corporations to work with unsuccessful students.

Funded according to the number of pupils served, the clinics provide services for dropouts (Mertens, interview 1988). Six are run by non-profit organizations including an Indian tribe and two exist for profit. Students can cross district lines to attend. Certified teachers are hired to teach basic academic skills and employment orientation.

The clinics, which began with the enactment of a state law in 1978, were bitterly opposed by the educational community including the Washington Education Association which said the money should have been given to the public schools to handle dropouts.

The clinics receive a total biennium appropriation of $3.4 million and later claim reimbursement per student served. Clinics with smaller class sizes receive more money, a system created by legislators to encourage a more personalized education. Barbara Mertens, State director of private education, says that although this method of funding is not cost-effective, it encourages smaller classes.

Legislators are developing proposals on public school choice for 1989 based on on-going hearings throughout 1988.

WISCONSIN

The state helped develop magnets in Milwaukee. Student movement between Milwaukee and the suburbs is double-funded to encourage participation and increased integration.

Two bills proposing the creation of smaller districts within districts in low-income areas and choice of any public or private school for low-income students with state funds following were defeated by the 1987-88 state legislature. See Chapter Two description of Milwaukee for full details.

WYOMING

State Senator Kelly Mader proposed a choice/voucher system in 1987 but it failed in the Senate Education Committee. The bill would have granted $1,000 a year to parents whose children attended nonpublic schools. (Mader, interview, 1988)

Mader said he did not anticipate that the bill would pass, but it did start discussions. The senator supports a voucher system involving nonpublic schools because most districts in the state offer only one high school. To effectively create a choice system, Mader says nonpublic schools should be options in the state's 43 districts. In dealing with the issue of the separation of church and state, Mader said the vouchers would be in the form of property tax rebates paid directly to the parents, not the schools.

Mader is currently researching vouchers and expects to reintroduce the bill in the 1989-90 legislative session.

Several of these states have been the national leaders in the creation of choice programs. These are described in greater detail in the sections that follow.

MINNESOTA: THE NATION'S LEADER

Minnesota continues to be the nation's leader in public school choice. The state has three major statewide programs now in place: Enrollment Options (for interdistrict enrollment), Post-secondary Enrollment Options (for college enrollment), and the High School Graduation Incentives Program (for high risk students). The goals of these programs are to create student achievement by encouraging school districts to be more responsive to parents, assist educators who want to create distinctive high quality programs, create school diversity, and improve parental involvement and educational morale.

The state's choice efforts have their roots in a long tradition, based on the law (M.S. 120.0752) that students may attend a non-resident district if both districts mutually agree. In such cases the student was supposed to be counted for funding only by the district of actual attendance. But the state had difficulty keeping track of which districts' students were actually attending; and, although the state has no exact figures, officials estimated many cases of "double funding" resulted. (Zastrow, interview, 1988).

Then, in 1985, a bitter statewide debate over public school choice generated the passage of legislation to permit enrollment in post-secondary institutions for 11th and 12th grade students for either high school or college credit. Opposition from the Minnesota Education Association, the Minnesota Federation of Teachers and the State School Boards Association prevented passage of an interdistrict enrollment plan at that time. Supporters of the plan included elementary and secondary principals, business leaders, the League of Women Voters, and community leaders representing the social work and nursing professions as well as community social action groups (Nathan, interview, June 28, 1988). In 1987, the plan which was officially called the School District Enrollment Options program received legislative approval and was signed into law (M.S. 123.3515) by Governor Rudy Perpich. The plan specified that for 1987 the program would consist of voluntary enrollment options with the resident district able to veto movement. In 1988 the program consisted of comprehensive enrollment options wherein the resident district could not veto the movement unless there was a negative impact on desegregation. That same year (1987) also saw the establishment of the Graduation Incentives Program for high-risk students.

DISTRICT ENROLLMENT OPTIONS

Minnesota's operating public school districts are each governed by a six- or seven-member school board consisting of members who are elected to three-year terms. The state has a history of interdistrict cooperation which has led to the creation of 22 special education cooperatives, 42 secondary vocational centers, nine cooperative service units (ECSU's) and seven computer regions. In addition, some districts have entered into formal cooperative arrangements (known in Minnesota as "pairing agreements") with other districts (Minnesota Department of Education, 1985).

The District Enrollment Options program is the nation's first, and only, statewide interdistrict enrollment plan.

Governor Rudy Perpich first introduced this proposal in 1985 but it was not approved by the legislature until early 1987. In its first year of operation, in the school year of 1987-88, 95 of the state's 435 districts opted to participate. That number grew to 153 districts in the 1988-89 school year.

The voluntary plan drew 137 students in its first year. Participating districts agreed to let resident pupils enroll in other districts and agreed to accept nonresident pupils from other participating districts. Students participants increased to 435 in the 1988-89 school year. The program has brought about the following program sequence as detailed in the 1988 legislation:

1987-88	Voluntary participation
1988-89	Voluntary participation
1989-90	Voluntary for those districts under 1,000 students; required for all others
1990-91	Mandatory for all districts (districts may establish the number of students they will admit)

In both the 1987 and 1988 legislation, "non-resident" districts, or all districts after 1990, must have adopted a written statement regarding the criteria used for approving or disapproving applications. Districts may not screen students based on past achievement or behavior. The Commissioner of Education has the right to review these statements, but she permits districts to exercise their own judgments (assuming they are within the law) in developing and approving the criteria. Commissioner Ruth Randall, a strong and articulate advocate of parent choice, believes that this local control is important to the growing acceptance of the program (Randall, interview, 1988).

Minnesota established the following minimum criteria as a basis which could be expanded upon by local districts:

* available space in district
* available space in program or building
* applications received according to deadlines established
* other criteria adopted by local board

Each local board is also required to comply with all Minnesota laws and regulations and with existing desegregation plans and guidelines. The three largest cities in Minnesota, Minneapolis, St. Paul, and Duluth, all have desegregation plans. According to Ken Zastrow, then program director, one of the main limitations to student movement has been the desegregation plans in the cities. A second ingredient, he felt, was transportation. (Zastrow, interview, 1988)

Under the open enrollment plan, state aid of up to $3,600 per student moves with the student to the receiving school district. The receiving, or non-resident, district shall provide transportation for non-resident students within the borders of the district. However, transportation to the border of the non-resident district is the responsibility of the parent. Low-income parents can apply to the non-resident district for state transportation funds which are allocated according to financial need. The State Board of Education establishes guidelines for financial need determinations (Zastrow, interview, 1988).

According to Joseph Nathan, "Two months after Governor Perpich made this proposal, a statewide poll found 33% in favor, 60% opposed. Nevertheless, parts of the Governor's proposal were adopted during each of the next four years. Experience encouraged support. A 1987 statewide poll found 56% favored Perpich's proposal (39% opposed). A summer 1988, statewide poll found 63% now supported the idea, with 31% opposed. In four years, opinions had changed from 2-1 against, to 2-1 in favor" (Nathan, Fine Print, October, 1988:5).

Critics of the Minnesota Enrollment Options Program include the state School Boards Association and the Minnesota Federation of Teachers. The first opposes the program on the fear that it will weaken rural districts by attracting students to larger districts with more extensive resources. The teachers association thinks that teachers could lose jobs if so many students move that local budgetary instability results. (Penkalski and Wager, 1988: 10).

Ironically, the MEA, which vigorously fought all choice plans, now sees possible benefits in what is taking place, says Gene Mammenga, an association lobbyist. "I couldn't convince people the sky was falling," he says in a Christian Science Monitor article. (CSM, June 10, 1988:19), "We are starting to see it as a teacher empowerment bill".

The action of the state legislature in Spring 1988, making the program mandatory in 1990-91 caught many supporters and opponents by surprise. When first debated in 1985, the issue divided the legislature and the state's education groups into two camps. The program's apparent success in terms of public perception and the parent survey results (100% said they would use the program again) played an important part in the creation of legislative action. Perhaps equally significant was the small size of the program with only 137 out of 227,071 eligible students electing to participate. The fears of earlier opponents that thousands would participate and thereby cause drastic local budgetary shocks failed to materialize. In 1988 several key legislative opponents of the program, when it was introduced two years earlier, became supporters of the mandatory legislation.

POST-SECONDARY ENROLLMENT OPTIONS

Since 1985 the Minnesota Post-Secondary Enrollment Options Program has allowed 11th- and 12th-grade students to attend an institution of higher education full- or part-time. The program attempts to match students' learning needs with an appropriate college course, or program, whenever that need cannot be met in the district. Both private and public colleges participate in this plan which has been well received by parents and students.

With parental approval, students apply through their school district for admission to the program. The district receives students' applications and then files them with the Post-Secondary Enrollment Options office of the state Department of Education. This office facilitates the movement of the application to the specified college and also handles the movement of funds. The colleges have the right to accept or reject a student but there have been few rejections. Sarah Smith, program director, feels there are "no impediments" to student participation (Smith, interview, 1988). In some cases, colleges also offer courses in high schools to classes of participating students.

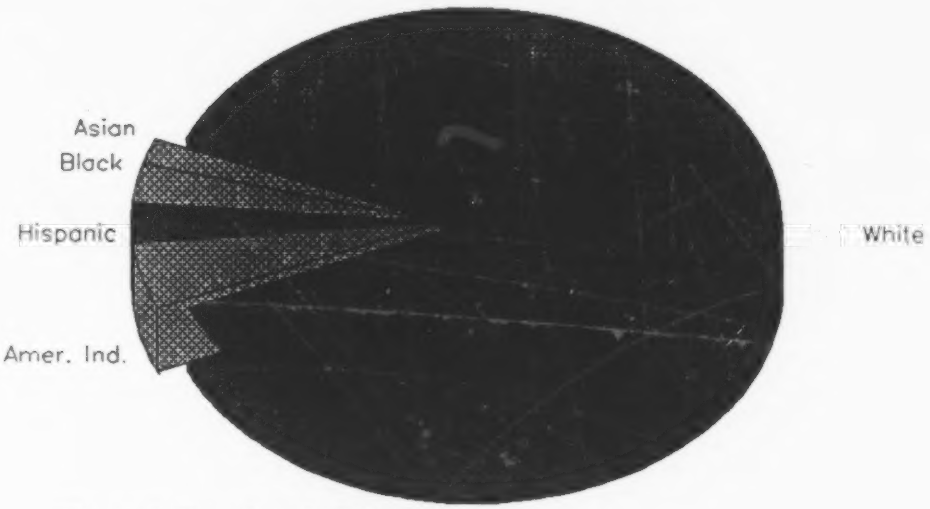
TABLE 3.1
MINNESOTA ENROLLMENT OPTIONS PROGRAM

(1987-88 data from student applications)
RACE/ETHNICITY

Number	Percent of Respondents	Response
114	87%	White, not of Hispanic origin
6	5%	American Indian or Alaskan Native
4	3%	Hispanic
4	3%	Black, not of Hispanic origin
3	2%	Asian or Pacific Islander
6		No response given
137	100%	

MALE/FEMALE PARTICIPATION: Male = 53%; Female = 43%.

Minnesota Enrollment Options Program: Ethnic Distribution



Source: **Minnesota Department of Education**

TABLE 3.2
MINNESOTA ENROLLMENT OPTIONS PROGRAM

(1987-88 data from student applications)
REASON FOR USING OPTION

Number	Percent of Respondents	Response
15	--	No reason given
19	44%	Curriculum, programs, academics
11	26%	Closer to home, work, daycare or job
10	23%	More options, facilities in larger districts
9	21%	Social/psychological benefits, social problems alleviated
7	16%	Better teachers/teaching
6	14%	More specialized classes (art, mechanics, welding, aviation, LD, HP, special help)
3	7%	Relocated, want to continue in former school
3	7%	Parents attended there
80		Separate reasons given by 43 respondents

TRANSPORTATION
Means of Transportation to District Boundary:

Number	Percent of Respondents	Response
35	61%	Family car
8	15%	School bus
6	11%	Walk to boundary
3	5%	Other car
2	4%	City bus
2	4%	Drive self
1	1%	Walk to school
57		Responses given on 58 surveys returned

Source: Minnesota Department of Education

TABLE 3.3
MINNESOTA ENROLLMENT OPTIONS PROGRAM

(INTERDISTRICT)
PARTICIPANTS

Year/Nature of Program	Total Number of Districts In State	Number of Participating Districts	Percentage Total State Districts	Total Number of Students Participating In District	Number of Students Elected To Participate	Percentage of Total Statewide Student Population Eligible to Participate
1987-88 FY88 (Voluntary)	435	95	22%	227,071	137	32%
1988-89 FY89 (Voluntary)	435	153	35%	347,984		49%
1989-90 (Voluntary)	435	not yet known	-	-	-	-
1990-91 (Mandatory)	435	435	100%	est. 1,043,955	not yet known	100%

Source: Minnesota Department of Education.

In the 1987-88 school year, students in 220 out of 435 districts participated in this program. Smith says that some districts not active in the program feel that the loss of students will hurt their budgets.

Tuition for college expenses ranging from a single course to a full semester load are shifted from the district to the post-secondary institution by the State Department of Education. These funds cover both the costs of tuition and of books. In rare cases where the tuition is higher than the available state aid the post-secondary institution (usually private) accepts the student at the available rate.

Enrollment for the Post-Secondary Enrollment Options program has grown steadily since its inception:

1985-86	3,500 students
1986-87	3,900 students
1987-88	5,400 students
1988-89	(not available)

According to Nathan, results show:

- About 89 percent of parents said these students learned more than they would have in high school courses.
- 95 percent of participating students said they were satisfied or very satisfied with the program.

Under the legislation guidelines all public post-secondary institutions are required to participate in the program. Participation is voluntary for private institutions. In 1987-88, six percent of the 5,400 students were previously high school dropouts (Durken, interview, 1988).

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION INCENTIVES

Minnesota moved aggressively to deal with the problems associated with high school dropouts. Initiated in 1987-88, the High School Graduation Incentives Program (HSGII) was originally aimed at high risk 12 to 21-year-olds and now has programs for students 21 and older. About 1,400 students participated in the program's first year. Of these, 50 percent were dropouts who returned to school (Initial Impact of High School Graduation Incentives, February 24, 1988). This year, at least 12 private, non-sectarian schools that have a contract with the public schools were approved by their local school boards as participants in the program, adding 300-400 more students (Nachman, interview, 1988).

TABLE 3.4

MINNESOTA POST-SECONDARY ENROLLMENT OPTIONS PROGRAM

TYPES OF POST-SECONDARY INSTITUTIONS PARTICIPATING:

- Area Vocational Technical Institutes
- Community Colleges
- State Universities
- University of Minnesota
- Private Colleges and Universities

GRADE LEVEL/SEX OF STUDENTS PARTICIPATING:

GRADE 12	73 percent*
GRADE 11	27 percent**
FEMALE	64 percent
MALE	36 percent

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* Of twelfth graders, 84 percent said they would pursue post-secondary education after high school graduation.

** Of the eleventh graders, 63 percent said they would continue the program in their senior year.

Source: **Minnesota Department of Education Post-Secondary Enrollment Options Program, Final Report, January 1987.**

TABLE 3.5
POST-SECONDARY OPTIONS PROGRAM

MAJOR REASONS FOR STUDENT PARTICIPATION

- to get a head start on college
- to take advantage of educational opportunities

MAJOR REASONS FOR SELECTING A PARTICULAR POST-SECONDARY INSTITUTION

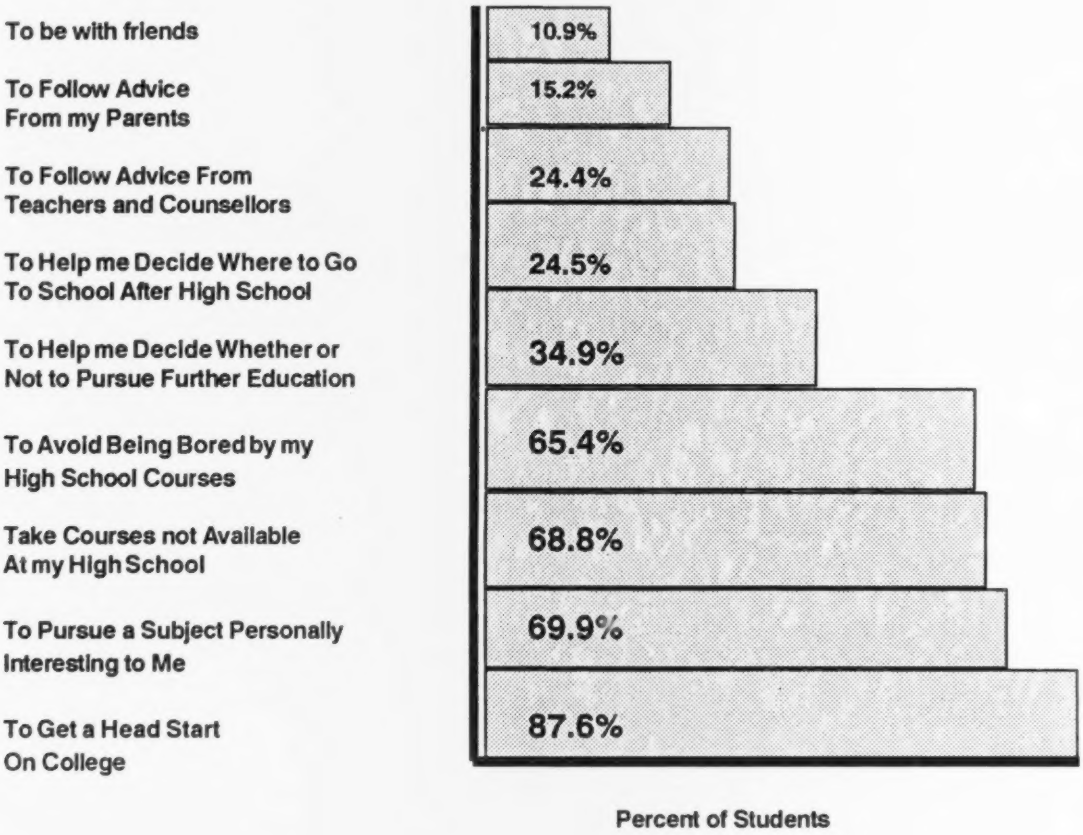
- close proximity
- available transportation

THE TYPICAL STUDENT

- enrolled in a single course
- attended a community college (49%)
- received grade of A or B (over 50%)
- most frequently studied areas (in rank order):
    - Humanities (Social Science, History, Foreign Languages)
    - Communication (English and Literature)
- Found postsecondary institutions more difficult than high school (77%)

Source: Minnesota Department of Education Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program, Final Report, January 1987.

REASONS GIVEN BY STUDENTS FOR PARTICIPATING IN THE POST-SECONDARY ENROLLMENT OPTIONS PROGRAM



NOTE: Multiple Responses Were Permitted.

Source: Minnesota Department of Education, Post-Secondary Enrollment Options, Final Report, 1987.

TABLE 3.7

MINNESOTA POST-SECONDARY OPTIONS PROGRAM PROBLEM AREAS FOR POST-SECONDARY INSTITUTIONS

	Percent of PSIs	
	Minor Problem	Major Problem
Coordinating Class Schedules with High School	29.7%	46.9%
Billing and Obtaining Reimbursement	43.8%	28.1%
Determining Student Eligibility	49.2%	7.7%
Handling Student Inquiries Efficiently	36.9%	7.7%
Obtaining Required Information from Student's High School	52.3%	8.2%
Determining which Courses to Make Available to PSEO Students	41.5%	4.6%

Source: **Minnesota Department of Education Post-Secondary Enrollment Options Final Report, January, 1987**

TABLE 3.8

MINNESOTA POST-SECONDARY OPTIONS PROGRAM

STUDENT BENEFITS FROM POST-SECONDARY OPTIONS PARTICIPATION

	Percent of Students
Get More Out of High School Courses	48.2%
More Certain About Type of PSI to Attend	73.4%
Better Sense Whether to Pursue Postsecondary Education	80.3%
More Academically Prepared	88.9%
Know Strengths and Weaknesses	89.6%
Know What to Expect at PSI	89.6%
Learned More Than if Only High School Courses	90.5%

Source: **Minnesota Department of Education Post-Secondary Enrollment Options Final Report, January, 1987**

HSGI targets dropouts who fall in the following main categories:

- pregnant students
- students two years behind in learning
- students one year behind in credits earned
- students who missed 15 or more consecutive days of school or otherwise have a pattern of excessive absences
- students with records of substance abuse

The program's philosophy is that teenagers need an educational program or school that fits their special needs. Under program guidelines these students can enroll in another school, an alternative school, an area learning center, a school in a non-resident district, a vocational or technical institute or a college. Education observers including Joseph Nathan, praise this program for its successes.

Students can re-enter an educational program through alternative public school, any other public school in the state or an approved private or non-sectarian education institution with which a school board has contracted. No district can refuse to admit these returning students, unless there are not available spaces. State aid funds, as in the Enrollment Options Program, follow students to the non-resident district (or to the post-secondary institution).

Area Learning Centers are one of the options available to persons participating in High School Graduation Incentives or School District Enrollment Options Program. Those who wish to finish high school in an alternative education setting, where the program is designed to meet the individual needs of the learners, can enroll in an Area Learning Center (Minnesota Department of Education). The Area Learning Centers develop individualized programs to fit a student's specific needs, which may include:

- academic and learning skill classes taught using alternative methods
- trade and vocational skills training
- work experience
- transition services which help students tap resources in obtaining additional education or employment

Admission qualifications for Area Learning Centers are based on on the following characteristics:

Secondary Pupils (16-21 years):

- chemically dependent
- not likely to graduate from high school
- need assistance in vocational and basic skills
- can benefit from employment experience
- need assistance in transition from school to employment

Adults (21 years and over):

- dislocated homemakers
- dislocated workers
- need basic education services
- need social services

- need basic education services
- need social services

Upon graduation a pupil may elect to receive a diploma from either the district of residence or the district in which the center is located when all graduation requirements of the district have been met (Minnesota Department of Education).

Can programs such as these reduce the rate of student dropouts? Recent studies of the possible relationship of choice and student dropout have suggested that choice can help reduce dropout rates. Nationally more than 25 percent of all ninth graders drop out by the time their class graduates. In New Jersey that figure is 15.8 percent. In urban areas the rate was substantially higher. Nationally, more than 50 percent of all entering freshmen in urban districts drop out. New Jersey's urban dropout rate is 25.3 percent (The Condition of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics, Washington, D.C., 1988). A New Jersey Department of Education study showed that 40.6 percent of student dropouts surveyed said the primary motivation for leaving school was dissatisfaction for academic or behavioral reasons (Vital Educational Statistics, N.J. Department of Education, 1988: 20).

A 1985 study by Porter Sexton of 3,000 Portland, Oregon high school dropouts revealed that students who "voluntarily transfer to high schools outside their neighborhood are less likely to dropout" (Sexton, 1985: 103). Sexton also found that the school attended was a more important variable in dropping out than the area or neighborhood of residence (Sexton, 1985: 95). The districtwide dropout rate for students attending their resident school was 7.13 percent while the dropout rate of those attending other high schools by choice was 4.54 percent (Sexton, 1985: 95). Mary Anne Raywid's analysis of choice programs also supports this general conclusion (Raywid, 1988: 3).

Dropout prevention initiatives are already underway in several states, targeting high-risk students such as pregnant teenagers, teenage parents, substance abusers, and students falling behind in age-level achievement or grade-level placement. In New Jersey these programs include the New Jersey Project on Suicide Prevention, Blueprint for a Drug-Free New Jersey and Urban Dropout Projects.

The urban high school dropout rate is especially troublesome. Frequently sociologists attribute this to inadequacies of the home environment and problems associated with urban life. Choice proponents argue that greater school alternatives can counterbalance these liabilities by providing more personalization. Most opponents of choice maintain that society's ills must first be remedied before dramatic changes, such as choice, can be considered.

Program Director Joleen Durken believes the greatest limitation of Minnesota's High School Graduation Incentive Program is the lack of state transportation aid. Nevertheless, department officials view the program as a success because most of the students in the program would not have returned to school if these options had not been presented.

Recently, the Minnesota State Department of Education opened up a telephone hotline to answer questions and inform the public about this and other choice programs. Although most are still in their earliest phases, the Minnesota choice programs have resulted in improved programs for many students whose needs were not previously being met, according to Commissioner Randall (Randall, interview, 1988).

MASSACHUSETTS AND CONTROLLED CHOICE

Massachusetts, a leading state in the pursuit of public school choice, uses a form of choice called "controlled choice" -- parental school selection subject to certain restrictions. The state suggested and encouraged intradistrict controlled public school choice as a means of improving desegregation efforts.

Cambridge, Lowell, Fall River, and Lawrence each adopted intradistrict controlled choice when designing desegregation plans. The major restriction on choice is that the schools' minority profile may not be adversely affected. To date, these districts have actually improved their intradistrict white/minority ratios and they are likely to meet their desegregation goals. About 8 percent or 64,000 students now attend primary schools by choice in the state (Fiske, 1988: B6).

The Massachusetts State Office of Educational Equity has played a critical role in the choice movement. Led by Charles Glenn and Michael Alves, the state office has encouraged the use of magnet schools and choice to achieve desegregation and to improve educational quality. The Institute for Responsive Education housed at Boston University has provided districts with significant technical assistance. Evans Clinchy, in particular, played an important role in developing choice plans in several communities, most notably Lowell and Fall River.

CAMBRIDGE

Home of Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the 6.2 square-mile city of Cambridge is located along the Charles River opposite Boston. It is a highly diverse urban center of 98,000 people representing 64 nationalities and speaking 46 languages. School officials say that this mixed population almost demands variety in schools and programs to meet students' needs.

Cambridge first implemented an intradistrict open enrollment option in the 1970s when parents and teachers designed a three-phase voluntary desegregation plan that allowed some degree of choice with limits based on integration.

In 1979, Cambridge students were given the option to transfer to schools outside their attendance zones if student movement did not negatively affect racial balance.

The city then redrew its neighborhood attendance zones in 1980 to promote further racial integration. Students previously assigned to neighborhood schools were grandfathered at those schools with new students assigned to schools according to the new district lines. The open enrollment (or transfer) option was still available.

Finally neighborhood school zones were abolished in 1981, thus giving new students a choice of school based on racial and space considerations with the exception of students needing bilingual or special education.

Known as the "Long Range Assignment Policy," open enrollment allows Cambridge parents to choose among 13 elementary schools (K-8) or special programs in them. They are allowed three rank-ordered choices from among the schools and special programs listed in Table 3.9.

Cambridge Rindge and Latin High School is divided for administrative purposes into four houses each with separate administrations, staffs and special programs. If students do not choose a specific program, they automatically are placed in a house. These administrative houses follow the European House Plan.* Most students from various houses overlap in classes through the school day. Students in some of the following special programs do not mix with other students:

Pilot School -- Oldest alternative high school in the country founded in 1969. Close-knit educational and social community of 200 students who are accepted according to race and academic standards. Teachers and students develop curriculum and courses of study.

Community Based Learning -- On-site learning in the form of internships and college-course work; school without walls approach.

Fundamental School -- Basic education with a focus on discipline of learning.

Enterprise Cooperative -- Alternative career-oriented program for high school students who have dropped out or are unsuccessful in school. All academic areas are covered as students operate food service or wood working shops. Profits are divided among students at the end of the year.

Rindge Technical Vocational Program -- Four-year vocational training program based on specific careers including auto body, auto mechanics, computers robotics, etc.

Adolescent Parenting Program -- Day care program for teen mothers and fathers while they complete high school credits. Students interested in careers in day care mind the children.

The majority of city school-age children attend public schools. (Of the 9,266 school-age children in the city, 84.8 percent attend public school, while 15.2 percent attend private/parochial schools.)

Public school enrollment for fiscal year 1989 totalled 7,674 students, 91 administrators, 778 teachers and 565 support personnel (Giroux, interview, 1988).

School Placement

Last year 93 percent received one of their first choices (Giroux interview, 1988). More than 60 percent of all students attended a school other than their neighborhood schools that same year (Alves and Willie, 1987: 77).

*** Under the House Plan a school is divided into smaller administrative units called houses. They are not usually based on separate academic themes.**

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TABLE 3.9

CAMBRIDGE ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

K-8 Agassiz	Academic Program that emphasizes basic skills and recognizes students' individual needs; open classrooms and strong parent involvement.
Fitzgerald K-8	Emphasis on creative writing; transitional bilingual program for Indian students.
Fletcher K-8	Develops individual skills and solid understanding of reading, listening, communicating and computing.
Haggerty K-6	Teacher-directed; basic skills tailored to individual needs and abilities; Spanish Immersion program.
Harrington K-8	Standard curriculum; Portuguese transitional bilingual, computer, Follow Through and special education programs.
Kennedy 5-8	Standard curriculum; Arts Partnership Program to stimulate student creativity; Winning Edge Program in cooperation with Boston Sports Museum and Cambridge Community Service assists students with developmental education problems by encouraging motivation through athletics
Longfellow K-8	K-3 literacy center, Hispanic and Chinese transitional bilingual program, 6-8 Intensive Studies Program for academically advanced students.
Graham and Parks Alternative Public School K-8	K-6 open classrooms; flexible scheduling for 7-8; Haitian bilingual and special education programs.
Martin Luther King K-8	King Regular Program for basic skills development; Open School Program of individualized education emphasizing creativity and student development; five self-contained special education classes; Chinese and Korean bilingual programs and English as a Second Language program.
Tobin School K-8	4-8 Middle Grades Open Alternative Program based on individualized education; parents assist in implementation; K-8 Computer School of the Future Program emphasizing basic skills through technology; K-8 traditional self-contained program; K-3 Follow Through.

Maynard School K-4	K-4 Amigos Program that brings Spanish-speaking and English-speaking children together in this two-way language school to develop skills in both languages; English as a Second Language, special education, Follow Through and computer programs.
Morse School K-8	Traditional curriculum with concentration on basic skills; Dramatic Arts Program in conjunction with Brown University to enhance writing and role playing by creating and performing original plays.
Peabody School K-8	Academics Plus Program with emphasis on basic skills; K-3 Literacy Center; 2-4 Literature Link Program for reading, emphasis and clarification of a variety of literature; MCZ Education Program for classes taught by professors of the Museum of Comparative Zoology at Harvard University and field trips at the Habitat Institute for Environment in Belmont; 4-8 Degrees of Reading Power Program for unique instruction and assessment of reading; 5-8 Mentor Program that pairs gifted students with college students and adults having similar interests; K-8 computer science program; K-8 Artist-in-Residence Program that brings in local artists, and K-8 Listening Project that trains auditory/receptive students.

NOTE: All elementary schools offer extended day kindergartens and after-school community programs in the buildings from 2:00 to 9:30 p.m. Child care is available until 5:30 p.m.

Parents who are dissatisfied with a school assignment may request a transfer. Cambridge maintains the same desegregation guidelines for transfer students as for other applicants.

Any parent whose choice is denied can file an appeal to the Office of Desegregation which will investigate, consult with parent(s) and other relevant individuals and make a recommendation to the Hardship Appeals Board. This board consults with the superintendent in its consideration of all cases and makes a final recommendation to the superintendent. The six-member board consists of a:

- Central Office administrator (chairperson)
- Bureau of Pupil Services representative
- Teacher (designated by the bargaining agent)
- Two parents (one minority; one non-minority, both appointed by the Office of Desegregation)
- Cambridge resident (representing religious, human or social services)

At least four of these members must be present to have a quorum when considering appeals.

Parent Involvement

In order for choice to be an effective means of increased student achievement and parental involvement, parents must understand the options available to them and become participants in the schools, according to Cambridge school documents ("Parents Participation and Choice in Public Schools," Cambridge Public Schools Parent Information Center, March 1987).

Parent participation is extensive in Cambridge, with about 45 percent of parents active in some way (Giroux interview, 1988). Involvement ranges from participation in parent/teacher conferences to parents assuming leadership roles. School administrators, teachers and staff in the city's Parent Information Center encourage this kind of involvement and provide information and assistance to Cambridge parents.

When selecting a school, parents can learn about all Cambridge elementary schools in "I've Got a Secret about the Cambridge Elementary Schools," a booklet that describes general information, services and special programs in the public schools and lists each school's philosophy, history, racial balance, programs, services, facilities and procedures. Some schools offer student and parent comments and information on parent involvement.

Local agencies and centers post information about city public schools as early as October. Informational meetings to familiarize parents with the schools are in November at central locations. Parents also tour the schools during this month. Parent Information Center staff, many of whom are multi-lingual, are available throughout the year, but specifically in December at sites throughout the city for kindergarten registration. At this time, parents make three choices.

When these efforts fail to reach some parents, staff members follow up by calling those who failed to register.

Parent Information Center

The Cambridge School System employs full- and part-time parent liaisons to run the Parent Information Center located in Harrington School. Their job is to involve parents in the schools. The selected parent staff members are located either at the center or at their child's elementary schools. Their responsibilities include attending school meetings, writing the weekly newsletter, giving school tours, surveying parent interests, etc.

Cambridge parents can be involved through participation in parent/teacher conferences, classroom activities, school committees, improvement councils or decision-making groups. Degrees of involvement vary according to the individual parent's interests and availability.

Involving working or low-income parents in the schools is often difficult because they do not have the time, according to school personnel. Some parents do not think they have the background or knowledge to contribute. Parent liaisons try to convince these parents that the schools need them to participate. Often, teachers initiate social functions for parents or visit students' homes and invite parents into the schools. Community school coordinators involved in after-school programs for latchkey children initiate recreational activities, plays or skits for parents to watch children perform.

Parent involvement is essential to the survival of schools such as Graham and Parks Alternative Public School. When students apply to this school, parents are interviewed and must commit themselves to aid a teacher for a day each month and may be asked to sit on textbook review, curriculum development and school personnel hiring committees.

The school's charter includes parental evaluation of teachers, but the local teachers union is against this practice. Parents are permitted to vocalize their opinions in committee meetings but are not allowed to submit written reports.

Parents also influence administrative decisions. Since 1972, parents have been involved in resume screening, interviewing, evaluating and recommending of candidates for the superintendency. Parental involvement in Cambridge has grown to such an extent that schools are required to have parental input on teacher hirings and transfers.

As this is written, the city is embarking on a superintendent search in which parent opinions will be solicited and carefully considered.

Parents are also instrumental in developing new curriculum or program ideas and in their implementation. For example:

- In the early 1970s, parents requested programs on safety and child molestation. This evolved into a fifth and sixth grade program sponsored by the police department. A robot/video cassette recorder, called "Officer Caring," informs children on safety, child molestation, alcohol and drug abuse.

- In 1986, Graham and Parks parents suggested that the children learn more about peace. Teachers and parents cooperatively wrote and incorporated a unit on peace

- Parents requested that the schools address issues on child abuse, date rape and sexuality. An outside agency was hired to come into the schools for this purpose. Before programs were presented, parents reviewed the contents.

- Parents wanted children to develop a rapport with the police; so schools established Friday morning field trips to the police station for eighth graders to learn about the operation, bookings, fingerprints, etc.

- Parents also suggest programs designed to meet school needs. In one incident, children painted anti-Semitic graffiti on a school building. Parents requested a program to show that the defacing of property is an offense and that certain types of graffiti can create racial stereotypes.

A 1988 study of parent attitudes in Cambridge (Bell Associates Inc., September 13, 1988: 34) showed that the majority preferred to be involved in their children's schools. Of the 700 people surveyed:

- 89 percent said they want to be involved in special school activities of sports, music or drama.
- 86 percent said they want to be involved in determining school policy and discipline.
- 82 percent want to help develop curriculum.
- 78 percent want to assist teachers in classrooms.
- 70 percent want to hire teachers.

Other Results

Controlled choice has caused transportation costs to increase dramatically since 1981, according to district transportation figures (Tompkins, interview 1988).

Before the enactment of the open enrollment option, most children attended and walked to their neighborhood schools. Now, 1,867 of the 7,800 children in the system are bused to school. In 1981, the district budgeted $54,365 for transportation. This year $1,224,668 was budgeted (Tompkins, interview 1988).

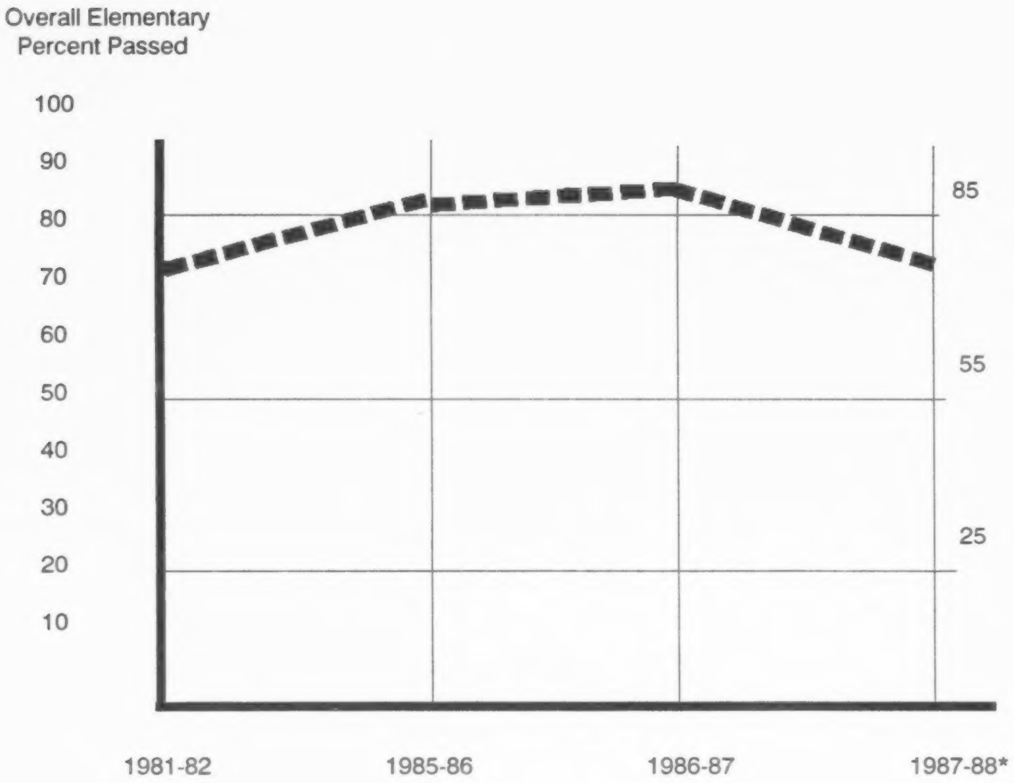
Cambridge has successfully lured back both black and white students from private schools. In 1988, 84.8 percent of city school-age children attended public schools in Cambridge -- up from 70 percent when the desegregation program began nine years ago (Giroux interview, 1988). All schools are now racially balanced.

Student achievement scores have steadily risen since choice was implemented in 1981. Basic Skills Test results show scores increased 14.2 percent from 1981-82 to 1985-86. Achievement continued to increase by comparable tests, but took a slight dive when the state established a 65 percent passing standard and increased the difficulty of the test in 1987. (See Table 3.10).

The city's choice program has shown that choice among all schools, "not just magnets," encouraged school improvement, according to political science professor Gary Orfield of the University of Chicago and local school officials (Orfield, 1988 and Giroux interview, 1988).

TABLE 3.10

BASIC SKILLS TEST RESULTS IN CAMBRIDGE ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS



*In 1987, the test was revised to correct deficiencies - the failure to distinguish between students' abilities and its capacity to establish a mastery standard. A statewide passing standard of 65 percent was also established.

Source: The Cambridge Controlled Choice Plan, January, 1988 and Burt Giroux, Public Information Director, Cambridge Public Schools.

LOWELL

An old factory town of 105,000 in eastern Massachusetts, Lowell is in the midst of an economic resurgence. Recently, several major corporations have established large offices here. The Lowell electronics industry employs many relocated Cambodians, making the town the second largest Cambodian community in the United States (Long Beach, California is first). About 38 percent of Lowell's population is minority with Cambodians and Hispanics representing most of that group.

Unlike Cambridge, Lowell did not implement controlled choice primarily as a traditional desegregation method. The main goals were improved quality of education, better use of space and linguistic integration; but greater racial balance also was achieved in the district.

Lowell created its first schools for voluntary desegregation in 1981. Five are neighborhood schools that open extra space to nonresidents for desegregation. Two others are magnets, Arts and City, that draw students from the entire city. (See Table 3.11 for descriptions of these magnets).

Before the implementation of choice in 1987, the district purchased portable classrooms and initiated a Centralized Enrollment Policy to "maximize parental choice and effective school desegregation" (Lowell Public Schools June 1987: 7).

The Lowell controlled choice plan divided the city into two large attendance zones creating increased options in each zone.

A seven-year influx of non-English speaking Cambodians was the prime motivator for the plan. The percentage of minority students in the school system jumped nearly 20 percent from 18.9 in 1981 to 38 percent in 1987 (Tsapatsaris, interview, May 9, 1988).

Because Massachusetts state law mandates that bilingual children be provided with transitional language training, the community swiftly located teachers and instructional space for bilingual education programs. Controlled choice was also seen as offering a better means of space allocation. The former system consisting of only neighborhood schools, left some with empty classrooms and some with severely overcrowded classes.

Another important result of the 1987 actions was the reduction of minority isolation caused by neighborhood schools. The Lowell School Committee adopted a desegregation plan which called for a "... new student assignment policy that will not be dependent on the city's residential housing patterns and which will better accommodate the programmatic needs of its linguistic minority students" (Ibid). The action prompted an earlier spirited debate over the neighborhood school issue with many parents arguing that choice would destroy these institutions. Others argued to the Lowell School Committee (school board) that integration of the schools was of greater benefit to the community. Ultimately, the pro-choice forces won in a close vote of the committee.

"One of the problems is resistance from those who want to maintain a neighborhood school," project Director George Tsapatsaris reported a year after implementation , (Tsapatsaris, interview, September 23, 1988). Another serious problem was the large increase in transportation costs. Because of the increase in student movement, a separate transportation department was created. The city was no longer dealing with "little neighborhood bus routes," said John Hennessey, director of transportation (Hennessey, interview, 1988). But controlled choice did result in better use of space and opportunity to achieve racial balance in each school.

During the 1987-88 school year, 65 percent of all parents received their first choice of schools. Many of these selected their neighborhood school. According to a May and June 1988 survey, 50 percent of all Lowell parents questioned wanted their children to remain in neighborhood schools while the other half preferred a choice of schools. Tsapatsaris says this standoff was offset somewhat by the number of parents -- 25 percent -- who chose a school other than a neighborhood school for five-year old kindergarteners (Ibid). It is unusual that parents choose a school other than the neighborhood school for kindergarten enrollment, which makes the 25 percent figure significant.

TABLE 3.11

LOWELL MAGNETS

The Arts and City schools, considered the centerpiece of the system, are housed in adjoining brick buildings in the recently renovated former Lowell trade facility. Both are citywide magnets.

The Arts School (K-8) was previously located on the south campus of the University of Lowell. Its curriculum provides a strong foundation in basic academic skills which focus on the support of creative artistic involvement of students through extensive programs in theater, visual arts and music. Specific activities include artists-in-residence programs and field trips.

The City School (K-8) represents a 60 percent white and 40 percent minority mix. Based on a "microsociety" theme, the students operate as a self-contained society. Computers are fully integrated into the curriculum. Main curricular areas include:

Publishing -- student-published newspapers and magazines
Economy -- student-operated banks and businesses in a free enterprise system
Government -- classes operate a legislature and four courts while a student president and vice president operate an executive department

High Technology -- students use microcomputers to complete projects related to these activities and in most other subjects

The following schools are neighborhood based schools:

Bartlett (K-8) serves as a science-technology magnet. The school wants students to understand scientific thought and work processes. Students use microcomputers including networked labs. Computers are directly linked to the University of Lowell weather station for instruction on weather.

Green (K-3) magnet school offers a continuous progress curriculum encouraging the mastery of basic skills and an adaptive Montessori method emphasizing self-discipline, independence and total development. Both programs feature an individualized curriculum. Microcomputers are used in most aspects of the curriculum.

Greenhalge (K-4) magnet school is for students who learn best in the structured environment of self-contained classrooms. The Language Arts program clusters groups that must master certain learning objectives before advancing to the next step. All students are instructed in art, music, physical education and computers.

Lincoln (K-5) offers a multicultural education throughout its curriculum. Ethnic understandings, frequently community-based, are an integral part of the curriculum. Parent participation in classroom activities is important to student learning. Computers are used in all classrooms to emphasize a hands-on approach to learning. The school also emphasizes community-based learning, use of the media, and learning centers.

Rogers (K-8) magnet emphasizes basic skills, discipline, order and high academic standards. Curricular areas of focus include environmental education, music and micro-computer applications. Parents are encouraged to be fully involved in school activities.

Lowell's one high school is divided into four houses or subunits, but does not use themes or specializations for each unit.

FALL RIVER

Although it is only in its second year of choice, Fall River illustrates that extreme care must be taken in choice planning, and that an effective choice program does not emerge overnight.

An industrial city of 90,000 people, Fall River implemented a system of choice in March 1987 based on a unique desegregation plan. The 10-year plan is designed to integrate Portuguese-speaking public school students who make up about 25 percent of the 12,179 children in the school system (New York Times, March 22, 1987:43). Parental choice is limited by space availability and a maintenance of 35 percent minority enrollment in every school.

Called the Magnet Education Program, Fall River choice allows parents to select any public school within one of the four zones into which the city has been divided. Such choice is limited to the zone in which the parents live, by space availability and by the desegregation guidelines. Since choice was implemented in 1987-88, the possibilities for continued integration of Portuguese students through choice are quickly becoming clear.

For instance, during the 1986-87 school year, 88 percent of the students at the neighborhood John Doran School were Portuguese. A year later, less than half of the school's kindergarteners were minorities. In fact, all kindergarten classes in the district's 27 elementary schools were at or near 35 percent linguistic integration. All of these students were enrolled through the Magnet Education Program (Providence Journal-Bulletin, September 8, 1987: C1). School officials predict that this program will result in full linguistic minority desegregation.

Fall River elementary schools enroll mostly kindergarten through sixth- grade students. All provide transitional bilingual classes in Portuguese. There are five middle schools and one comprehensive high school. Before the adoption of choice, elementary students were assigned to neighborhood schools.

Parents are provided with careful guidance in school selection through the following nine sequential steps:

1. Visit a parent information center
2. Secure brochures
3. Ask questions
4. Arrange for school visits
5. Visit schools
6. Secure registration forms
7. Read materials and evaluate schools
8. Select three or more schools in rank order to preference
9. Return all forms to the parent information center

In 1987 and 1988 the district operated four parent information centers, housed in four elementary schools. An extensive parent outreach effort including media and press announcements supplemented the centers. .

As a corollary to the controlled choice system, the district implemented a school site based planning process highlighted by increased teacher and parent participation. Not all 27 elementary schools were initially slated as magnets but by late 1986, concerns for equity led the school committee to redesign all schools as magnets. The district funded about $20,000 in school improvement grants for 10 of the 27 schools which were ready to start the planning process. These funds paid for the time of the administrators, teachers and parents who participated in the process to develop a unique focus for each school. Principals and teachers were paid overtime (standard $12/hour) parents received $8/hour. These groups met at least once a week for about 10 weeks. Funds are being awarded in successive stages to the schools for development of specific curricular themes.

Consultant Evans Clinchy of the Boston-based Institute for Responsive Education provided guidance for each school-based planning team. In order to coordinate school planning efforts, at least one parent and teacher from the planning team must have been a member of the School Improvement Council, a state-mandated group that receives $10 for each student in the school to spend on school improvement. By state law, every school in the state must have such a council, made up of the principal, three elected teachers, three parents an one community member. Each council receives the $10 per student in operation funds.

Fall River also has a Parent Planning Advisory Council which serves as an information-sharing mechanism for parents and provides input to the planning process. Consultant Rona Wilensky characterized the council in her April 1988 report for the Education Commission of States as "a cadre of very well-informed parents, who are representatives for all parents ... This additional source of information and energy further enhances the ability of all parents to obtain the information they need to make good decisions for their children" (Wilensky, 1988: 6).

The citywide Parent Planning Advisory Council consists of one parent and one alternate from each school in the district elected yearly by parents in those schools. The council elects its own co-chairpersons and meets monthly.

Critics of the planning process currently underway in these ten schools argue that year-to-year funding of plan development has been inconsistent. They also point out the wide disparity between district policy statements about the quality and actual funding and support of efforts. Further, they report that some schools are far ahead of others as the process begins which makes long-term funding necessary for others to catch up. Many are pessimistic about future continuity. "The general feeling among teachers and principals, however, was that if for some reason nothing comes of the efforts they have put in, it will be a cold day in hell before they volunteer for this kind of effort again," Wilensky said in a summation of the Fall River situation for the Education Commission of the States Report (Wilensky, 1988: 8).

Many in Fall River initially greeted the opportunity for parent involvement with enthusiasm. The results, however, have apparently left some less than satisfied. Poor parent involvement in choice planning or the choice process was chiefly due to a lack of interest. "Despite the significant and successful efforts made to inform parents of the new registration mechanisms and to facilitate their decision-making, it appears that involving parents in the schools in a more substantive role will be an uphill battle," according to Wilensky.

Although they have not been completely successful so far, choice program parent involvement activities are continuing this year.

BOSTON

By the early 1970s Boston's segregated schools, so dramatically described in Kozol's Death at an Early Age (1967), began to change their enrollment policies. Litigation led to a federal court-ordered desegregation plan in 1975 which resulted in the creation of magnet schools to supplement regular neighborhood assignments. Parents can apply to 21 city-wide magnet schools or choose a school in their attendance area.

Parents submit up to three rank-ordered choices of schools. Students are admitted subject to race and space guidelines. Since the program began most Boston parents have received at least one of their choices. In 1983 when 53,271 parents selected schools, about 69 percent received their first choice, more than 5 percent received their second choice, 9.2 percent did not receive any of their choices, and 16.4 percent who did not file an application were reassigned to their previous school of enrollment or to their neighborhood school (Glenn, 1986: 21-31).

Several court-approved changes were made to this desegregation plan in 1985. Two of the city's four residential districts offered white students spaces in schools in black neighborhoods while black students received the same offer in predominantly white schools. This process improved integration in Boston. In 1986-87 the 21 magnet schools were permitted to recruit students from outside their assigned attendance zone. Choice was expanded somewhat, with the city-wide magnets but others are still limited to attendance zones.

The Massachusetts Office of Educational Equity views the Boston plan as a success and a vast improvement over the older mandatory assignment practice.

Boston is considering a plan for controlled choice similar to the Cambridge schools to begin in September 1989 (Clinchy, interview, 1988).

The METCO Program

The state-supported METCO (Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity, Inc.) program allows non-white Boston and Springfield students to attend suburban schools. Suburban districts participating in the program, which began in 1965, get a dollar amount per student ranging from $2,000 to $3,000. The state also pays full transportation costs. Currently almost 3,000 Boston students are participating in the one-way program. The state will pay $13.1 million in support for 1988-89.

Interested students must apply to METCO, but almost all are accepted. Some view this as a "creaming off" of capable city students. In some cases, athletes have been recruited. Because the option to choose a school is only open to city students, some say METCO is unfair to suburban students. The opportunity to choose also should be available to suburban students wishing to come into the city, according to Evans Clinchy (Clinchy interview, October 1988). METCO director Jean McGuire says students in the program leave Boston City because they are dissatisfied with the schools and questions how many suburban students would want to come into the city.

NEW YORK CITY'S COMMUNITY DISTRICT 4

Community District 4 is a pioneer of public school choice. This largely Hispanic community's intradistrict choice program made of alternative schools mostly at the junior high level has attracted national and international attention for student achievement and teacher innovation.

Rock-bottom reading and math scores ignited the move for reform in the district in 1974 when the seeds for choice were sown under the leadership of then Superintendent, Anthony Alvarado and then Director of Alternative Schools Sy Fliegel. In the succeeding years, district administrators urged teachers and parents to create more alternative schools for the system.

The actual implementation of district-wide choice thorough "open-zoning" (open-enrollment) at the junior high level flourished in 1983 when Carlos Medina became superintendent and Fliegel became deputy superintendent.

Because district administrators were satisfied with elementary student achievement scores, these schools remained zoned by neighborhoods with limited choice. Of the 21 elementaries, 15 are traditional or bilingual schools. The other seven are gifted and talented and open classroom alternatives to which any student in the district may apply.

Choice in East Harlem is mostly at the junior high level with all 24 junior high schools as alternatives. Only seven of these maintained traditional themes. All sixth graders must choose a school for junior high education.

Most of East Harlem's alternatives have been created by teachers and parents interested in specific themes or teaching styles. Teachers appointed by the district serve as directors of each program. Directors are autonomous in staff supervision, curriculum development and student instruction. Directors are responsible to building principals only for safety, security, and building utilization. Under this arrangement most school buildings house several schools each with a separate student body, faculty and director. There are 50 schools in the 20 school buildings in East Harlem. As many as five "schools" may be housed in a single building.

In A Place Called School John Goodlad wrote favorably of the need to reduce school size. "It is not impossible to have a good large school; it is simply more difficult," (Goodlad, 1984: 309). He recommended a school of no more than 12 teachers and 300 students. Goodlad reported that closer student-pupil interaction was among the chief benefits of reduced size. The size of traditional schools made it difficult for teachers to relate to students. In many East Harlem schools, enrollments are from 100 to 250 students.

TURNING A DISTRICT AROUND

When alternatives first appeared, East Harlem ranked last in almost all categories used to measure New York City districts. Many people thought there was nothing to be lost by trying alternative approaches. In fact, some said that "things could not get any worse."

Fliegel worked with Deborah Meier, an innovative principal and founder of Central Park East schools, and a host of other teachers in the 1970s to transform the district's schools (Daley, New York Times, July 18, 1988: B5).

The results have amazed even the most doubtful of the system's possible success. Student achievement test scores have risen steadily and parent satisfaction has increased throughout the past 12 years.

Parents and teachers in this community plagued by drugs and racial tensions put together a "democratic community" based on "full citizenship and egalitarian ideals." Central Park East Principal and founder Deborah Meier wrote (Meier, 1987: 754):

> While we were in part the products of what was called open education, our roots went back to early progressive traditions, with their focus on the building of a democratic community ... We believe we looked upon Dewey, perhaps more than Piaget, as our mentor.

The teachers' desire for greater autonomy was a motivator in the creation of district alternatives, according to Meier. "We all came together with our own visions -- some collective and some individual -- of what teaching could be like if only we had control," she wrote (Meier, 1987: 755).

Most importantly, district administrators abandoned the conventional theory that one building equals one school. With the idea that more autonomous school units could result in smaller schools and greater personalization of education, the administration encouraged small groups of teachers and parents with common interests to create schools.

According to Fliegel, the restructuring of schools was based on several assumptions (Fliegel interview, 1988):

A school should have a philosophy.
- School size should be small.
- Choice extends "ownership" of schools to parents and teachers.
- Every teacher should know every child in the school.

Among the most serious difficulties the district encountered was the appointment of teachers as directors of alternative schools. Controversy with the principals association took months to resolve. Ironically many of these teachers have secured their certification as principals since assuming these roles.

More problems arose when change supporters had to establish a working partnership between the high school division and district to create Central Park East Secondary School. Meier and others saw students completing elementary alternatives (One Central Park East, Two Central Park East and River East) only to enter a traditional high school with no alternatives. Meier wanted to open options at all levels; so Central Park East Secondary School was created as part of the Theodore Sizer Coalition for Essential Schools Project. With an emphasis on the humanities, Central Park East Secondary School serves students from One and Two Central Park East and River East elementary alternatives and other interested students'. In 1991, Central Park East Secondary School will graduate its first class to attend alternatives since kindergarten.

The idea that an alternative high school means a school for difficult kids was firmly entrenched in the tradition of New York City high schools as was the anxiety about preparing students for the real world, Meier wrote (Meier, 1987: 757). But the alternative movers and shakers persisted and the disbelievers acquiesced.

Test scores have skyrocketed in this district that once ranked last of 32 schools. It is now 17th with 64 percent of the students reading at grade level up from 15 percent 15 years ago (Fliegel interview, 1988).

The reputation of East Harlem's alternatives has grown so much that parents from outside the district are enrolling their children in these schools, according to Fliegel. In fact, last year almost 1,000 nonresident students attended district alternatives (Coleman, interview, 1988).

Central Park East Secondary School has received national honors, as has Principal Meier who recently received the prestigious MacArthur award with a sizable cash award for her leadership. The award is given to the individual to expand her work.

SELECTING SCHOOLS IN COMMUNITY DISTRICT FOUR

Mary Coleman, Assistant Director of Alternative Schools, believes that it is the orientation of parents, teachers, students and administrators that makes the choice machine move.

Selection of schools or "open zoning" begins in mid-April each year. Parent-teacher workshops, school visits, possible interviews and completion of choice application must be done before the acceptance process.

Students make six rank-ordered school selections on an open zoning application. Among the alternative and traditional choices at the junior high level are:

Academy of Environmental Science
B.E.T.A. School
Bridge School
Career Academy
College for Human Services Junior High School
Creative Learning Community
East Harlem Maritime School
East Harlem Performing Arts School
East Harlem School of Health Bio-Med
Harbor School
Central Park East Secondary School
Isaac Newton
Key School
Manhatten East
Northview Center for Communication Arts
Jackie Robinson Music Academy
Science and Humanities
New York Prep
Rafael Cordero Bilingual School
Junior High School 45, John S. Roberts
Junior High School 50
Public School 72 Media Program
Junior High School 99, Julia de Burgos
Public School 109 SEARCH

On this application sixth grade teachers must rate students from 1-5 as a student and person, and on work habits and academic abilities; check any special services currently received; and record standardized reading and math scores.

This year, 40 percent of the 2,700 sixth graders choosing junior high schools received their first choice. Less than 1 percent were assigned to their fourth, fifth or sixth choice.

Despite the apparent success of choice in Harlem District 4, its impact on the rest of the city has been negligible to date. District 2 Superintendent Anthony Alvarado, a pioneer of choice in Harlem District 4, now plans to implement choice in his lower Manhattan district. Former District 4 Deputy Superintendent Sy Fliegel is now superintendent of community District 28. Moreover, current schools Chancellor Richard Green arrived in New York fresh from the superintendency of the Minneapolis, Minnesota schools where he encouraged the development of choice options. However, it still remains to be seen if choice will become more prevalent in New York City's school districts.

TABLE 3.12

BASIC ASSUMPTIONS OF COMMUNITY DISTRICT 4 ALTERNATIVE PROGRAMS

* When children and parents are given a choice in selecting their own school from among several alternatives, the children's interest and motivation for learning are significantly increased and the school is able to better develop interests and raise achievement.

* When teachers are given the opportunity to develop an educational program, with clearly defined objectives, emphasizing a special interest, education, or individualized, departmentalized instruction - a meaningful, successful learning environment can be achieved. Inherent is the belief that when professional staff agrees on a common approach, philosophy, and set of objectives, the opportunities for success are greatly enhanced.

* Smaller schools are better able to deal with the multiplicity of challenges that children face on a day-to-day basis. The staff nd children are able to establish a close positive relationship; they simply get to know each other better and that is most important in establishing an educational environment conducive to learning and development.

Source: Mario D. Fantini, Regaining Excellence in Education, 1986.

CHAPTER FOUR

SHARED CHARACTERISTICS OF PUBLIC SCHOOL CHOICE PROGRAMS

DIVERSE APPROACHES TO CHOICE

Diversity is the key to understanding this nation's many approaches to public school choice. Although linked to the variation in local needs, historic state and community educational patterns and varying funding resources, some common characteristics have emerged in intradistrict and interdistrict choice programs.

Intradistrict choice programs utilize either magnet or alternative schools to provide choice and greater diversity within a system. Generally these programs included a greater academic role for teachers, increased parental involvement, heightened school autonomy and smaller school enrollments.

A central concern in interdistrict programs was equitable funding. In Minnesota all state aid funds (including tax levy receipts) follow students from one district to another. Other districts participating in interdistrict programs, such as the Boston Metco, agree on the number of participating students and a funding method. While intradistrict choice in the systems studied appears largely at the elementary and junior high school levels, interdistrict choice tends to be centered more at the high school level. Similarly post-secondary choice options are primarily focused on 11th and 12th grade students. Programs to provide choice for high risk students frequently target grades 7-12.

SCHOOL SIZE AND CHOICE

Choice advocates frequently recommend smaller schools designed to provide a more personalized education for students. Schools, organized on academic specialities or specific methodological themes (i.e., open education), are more likely to become "educational communities" (Fantini, 1974:199). Alvin Toffler, whose Future Shock forecast more than 18 years ago the current movement for educational alternatives, recently outlined the characteristics of the societal shift from a primarily homogenous family base to a heterogeneous one. We are now "moving into a system that not only tolerates but encourages a much wider range of personality types" (Toffler, 1988:43). Corporate president Daryl R. Conner sees "smaller operating groups," as the key to "synergy" (or the power of combined action) which he believes will emanate from small interdependent groups sharing a common goal (Conner, 1988:37). Both Fantini and Toffler maintain that smaller learning units will make education much more personalized and humanized. Fantini supported smaller learning units as early as 1974 in his book What's Best For The Children:

> **The establishment of smaller learning units takes us a step closer toward the humanization process. Also important decision-making authority is returned to the individual rather than to his representatives, to individuals closest to the point of action--teachers, students, and parents.**

TABLE 4.1

INTRADISTRICT CHOICE PROGRAMS: COMMONLY USED GUIDELINES
(Based on choice composite from New York and Massachusetts)

* Parent and teacher/principal surveys are conducted to determine the educational choices or options that both parents and professionals want.

* Parents list their top two or three choices. The district provides first choices subject to desegregation goals and available space.*

* Children with siblings in a particular school are placed in that same school if requested by the child's parents.

* Enrollment is monitored carefully by district administration to ensure that no school negatively departs from districtwide racial percentages by more than 5 percent.

* Teachers are asked to select the school in which they wish to teach. District administration try to match as many teachers as possible with their preference. Final authority for teacher placement rests with district administration.

* All nonclassified students are eligible for admission into any school. Schools do not set academic barriers for admission. However, districts are encouraged to develop schools or programs with special appeal to particular kinds of learners, e.g. two-way bilingual schools or programs.

* All schools in the system must meet district educational goals and objectives.

* All schools in the system are granted school-based autonomy to execute their programs with the principals responsible for results and facilitating the involvement of teachers and parents.

* Teachers are treated in a collegial manner and given extensive authority over the design of programs. They are accountable for educational results.

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*Although a common placement practice, choice advocates say that providing of enough spaces through allowing the development of parallel programs is much more desirable.

Opponents argue that smaller schools might not necessarily result in improved student learning. Further, some feel that smaller units will be difficult to manage effectively by a centralized local school administration. Larger schools, they argue, with better facilities and small class sizes, can be equally effective structures for improving learning.

In Winning the Brain Race (1988) Kearns and Doyle maintain that public school choice can be facilitated by restructuring a large school district of more than 2,500 students into a system of magnet or specialty schools each with different academic areas of focus. Parents can select from available choices of elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools where possible. These schools would refocus their curriculum, involve parents directly in the process and compete with each other to attract students.

Kearns and Doyle recommended that schools be recast into "special centers for competence" in "such areas as science and mathematics, telecommunications and the performing arts" (Kearns and Doyle, 1988:140). According to the U.S. Department of Education there are currently 3,800 districts in the U.S. with 2,500 or more students. In New Jersey, there are 113 such districts (of 583 operating school districts).

Choice proponents say that the restructuring of large urban districts would provide greater personalization of learning by offering choice among public schools, thus creating better matches between student interest and academic specializations. In many choice systems traditional schools still exist as options within this system.

On the other hand, critics argue that this type of restructuring would be too costly in teacher retraining to meet the needs of new specializations. They argue further that it could prove too difficult to manage enrollment, budgeting and transportation patterns for the district. The Alum Rock experiment shows that choice also has a better chance of success if the community is not satisfied with its existing schools, sees a need for improved educational quality, and welcomes choice as a means to achieving these objectives. These conditions might well be critical to consider before large districts are split into smaller units. Nevertheless, reduced school size does appear to be an important ingredient in creating a system of choice.

SCHOOL BUREAUCRACY AND CHOICE

Arguments regarding school size raise an important choice-related question: Can learning be improved by decentralizing district bureaucracies and by creating more autonomy and authority for the individual school principal and his/her staff? Education in most urban centers is coordinated by extensive central office bureaucracies. In many choice plans the authority of central office over myriad details of school operation are shifted to the school principal who is held accountable for goal-measured performance.

In intradistrict choice systems districtwide administrative offices coordinate the process of parent school selection and handle administrative details to facilitate the process. However, each school has greater academic and organizational autonomy to operate. Similarly, effective schools research reveals that school autonomy is an essential ingredient of success.

Careful planning and attention is taken in the development of an atmosphere of common trust and purpose in the schools and the definition of new roles for parents and teachers. In Community District 4 and Cambridge, local school principals still had the authority and accountability to run their schools. Schools are more autonomous and also more accountable. The Carnegie Task Force on Teaching as a Profession in its report A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century (May 1986) called for this kind of autonomy:

> **Restructure schools to provide a professional environment for teaching, freeing them to decide how best to meet state and local goals for children while holding them accountable for student progress.**

In the course of John Goodlad's study of schools for A Place Called School, he met parents and teachers "... who concurred on the desirability for a rebalancing of power toward greater decentralization and localism" (Goodlad, 1983:273). They expressed a desire for an increased decision-making role for parents and parent organizations. But Goodlad noted that they did not want to elevate parental authority "above the professional individuals and groups or the board." A carefully planned school environment with clearly defined roles for all components is an important ingredient in successful choice programs (Goodlad, 1983:273).

There are two main hindrances to this approach. First, only a few models exist in large urban cities. A second, more serious, problem is the perception held by many that a choice plan which includes an extensively decentralized administrative structure might lessen local school board authority and concurrently reduce control of education. Decentralization advocates say that board powers to set district education goals are not altered and that the only thing that is lessened is the stranglehold of bureaucratic red tape, frequently caused by a centralized district bureaucracy. Schools are allowed to figure out the means to meeting these goals.

CHOICE AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SENSE OF COMMUNITY

Paul Goodman argued that society's institutions, especially schools, tend to dehumanize young people. He urged schools to utilize individual freedom of choice more and to develop a sense of community among administrators, parents, students and teachers. His response to dehumanization was to humanize the schools through the creation of relationships based on mutual respect and the encouragement of learning (Pratte, 1973:164-177).

In their study of 1,015 Catholic schools, James S. Coleman and Thomas Hoffer found that students in private and Catholic high schools were more likely to graduate and to go on to college than their public school counterparts. The school-community relationship was the key ingredient in explaining these differences. Catholic schools in the study provided settings which reinforced "the embeddedness of young persons in the enclaves of adults proximate to them, first and most prominently the family and second, a surrounding community of adults (exemplified in all these results by the religious community)" (Coleman-Hoffer, 1987:229). Can public schools develop the same cohesive community through greater parental involvement? Or is this quality of community so linked to the religious basis of Catholic education that it could not be replicated in the public sector?

Catholic school enrollments in urban centers are continuing to increase nationally. Catholic school enrollment of non-Catholic elementary students in Manhatten, the Bronx and Staten Island rose from 14.8 percent in 1981 to 17.6 percent in 1987 while enrollments in Catholic high schools jumped from 6.5 percent to 10.1 percent in those same years (New York Times, Sept. 13, 1988, 25A).*

Most public school choice programs in this study tried to develop positive relations through the creation of an atmosphere of mutual respect and cooperation between parents, students, teachers and administrators.

THE ROLE OF PARENTS

The question at the root of the public school choice issue is: Should parents be allowed to choose a school which they think best meets the needs of their child or should school enrollment continue to be determined by residence?

Some people, including educators, dispute the latter practice saying that if parents are given the necessary information, characteristics and specializations of the schools, they would be able to decide intelligently on student placement.

Two researchers, J. E. Coons and S. D. Sugarman, supported this approach in their book Education by Choice: The Case for Family Control (1978). These writers said parents have the most intimate knowledge of the child. If society presumes that parents have the right to be responsible for a child's general welfare, including food and shelter, then it follows that parents have the right to be responsible for selecting a child's school (Coons and Sugarman, 1978:66-70).

An opposing view is provided by Cornel Hamm in "Constraints on Parents Rights Concerning the Education of their Children" in Michael E. Manley-Casimir: Family Choice in Schooling: Issues and Dilemmas, (1982). Hamm countered that there was little similarity between parental family support for basic food and shelter needs and the responsibility for the "public principles that govern knowledge and understanding required for rationality (Hamm in Manley-Casimir, 1978:79)." He also argued that intimate details about a person are not needed in order to plan an educational program.

*** The national percentages for non-Catholic enrollment in Catholic schools are similar: 2.7 percent in 1969 to 11.2 percent in 1987 (New York Times, Sept. 13, 1988, p. 1A.)**

By law, parents must enroll children in school by the age of six. In choice systems, it is the parents' responsibility to choose a school for enrollment. Parental school selection automatically brings parents into the planning of their child's educational program, unless parents do not use the choice option. Children of these parents are usually administratively placed in the neighborhood school of their resident area.

Another issue is how well parents can determine what educational programs suit their children. Arthur G. Powell and David K. Cohen in The Shopping Mall High School (1985:177) found in their study of 15 American high schools that "the educational background of parents strongly influences their capacity to be an informed and effective pressure group for their children." Conversely in a related review of the involvement of parents in student course selection, Powell and Cohen found that parents without high school or post-secondary educations often "...don't know what courses (their children) are taking, don't know the names of their counselors, and rarely come to schools for any reason" (Powell and Cohen, 1985:44).

Even though the schools evaluated in the Powell and Cohen study were not schools of choice, the problems related to poor participation in school activities by low-income parents may be amplified in systems of choice which depend upon such involvement.

Can a public school choice system be successful when predicated on parental involvement in the choice option and the schools? There are several factors which have a negative impact on choice systems.

Since the 1970s, American families have realized that one income is no longer enough to maintain their standard of living. In some cases it is not enough to make ends meet. In most families, both parents are employed. By 1985 more than 60 percent of American women with children under 18 were employed, according to Dorothy Rich in a National Education Association report, Schools and Families: Issues and Actions, (1987).

Last year, 51 percent of working women returned to the workforce within a year of bearing a child, according to the U.S. Bureau of Census (June 1988).* Furthermore, the family unit has been split by divorce and resultant one-parent families. The latest statistics show that 1,700,000 children are involved in divorce each year (Youth Indicators: 1988, Trends in the Well-Being of American youth, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education: 10) Last year, 84.5 percent of divorced women with children ages six to 17 were part of the labor force. (Ibid.: 40).

One-parent families rose from 13 percent in 1970 to 26 percent in 1985. Fifty percent of all black children live with a single parent (Rich, 1987:36-38 and Spencer Rich, Washington Post, May 15, 1985, "One Parent Families Found to Increase Sharply in U.S." *

***In 1976, the first year the Bureau of Census started gathering such data, the figure was 31 percent.**

These economic and social factors negatively influence parent involvement in school activities, especially in urban areas with large minority populations. Yet there is firm evidence that parent involvement levels of all socio-economic groups are higher in schools of choice than in schools of assignment.

Richard Nault and Susan Uchitelle in their study of a town they named Collegeville noted a relationship between socioeconomic class and parental awareness of choice:

> **We document in our work a relationship between social class, parental awareness of choice opportunity, and parental contact with the school in researching options; the less well-educated parents we interviewed were less likely to have been fully informed about their opportunity for choice.***

Some communities that offer a choice among public schools have provided extensive parental outreach efforts to involve all parents, especially low-income parents in the choice process.

In Fall River, Massachusetts choice initiators realize that extra efforts are necessary to encourage parents who are not yet involved in choice planning in large numbers, even when offered an important role in program development.

"Active parent advisory councils bring significant educational bureaucratic and political benefits. The consequences are positive for both programs and student," according to Milbrey Wallin McLaughlin and Patrick Shields in their recent report on "Involving Low Income Parents in the Schools: A Role for Policy?" published in Phi Delta Kappan (1987:157).

In some communities offering choice, parents not only became involved in school selection, but in the schools themselves (i.e. Cambridge and Prince George's County).

One factor in determining the extent of parental involvement seems to be whether parents were involved in real decision-making role. When they have pro forma advisory roles only, the results have been poor. When parents are placed as participants in real decision-making roles as in two of the communities studied, the results are much more positive.

Goodlad argued for balanced parental input. In the past, he wrote, the debate has been of an "either/or variety" calling for parent-run versus administrative traditional schools. Goodlad believed that parent-run schools leave parents uncomfortable in holding "one's neighbors accountable" (Goodlad, 1983:273). Most parents want to be involved, but do not want to take over the schools.

*** "School Choice in the Public Sector: A Case Study of Parental Decision- making" (Manley-Casimir, 1982:97). See also Gary Bridge , "Information Imperfections: The Achilles' Heel of Entitlement Plans," School Review 86, May 1978:507-529)**

In Cambridge, Massachusetts, parents are encouraged to participate in school committees dealing with such topics as curriculum development, school policies, parental advisement and student services.

In Community District 4, parents assisted in the creation of some of the academic themes comprising the choice program. Parents in Cambridge played an important role in the development and implementation of a parent information system. Parent information systems studied offered printed guides detailing school themes and provided orientation sessions for parents. The successful parent information systems in Cambridge and Lowell, Massachusetts are in part a result of extensive parental roles in these efforts.

The Cambridge model for parent involvement has the following components:

Involvement on school and district wide committees to
(a) design school themes
(b) hire teachers
(c) develop parent information procedures and materials
(d) participate in educational planning

Researchers say parent and family involvement in the schools can do much to improve student achievement. Recent research is affirming the belief that the family role as an educator of children is extremely important.

Teachers are realizing that a partnership with parents can reinforce student learning in school and improve the level and quality of parent involvement. Teachers and principals interviewed in the course of this study agreed that the reinforcement provided by parents is critically important in many areas including reading, vocabulary, work habits, values and homework.

Extensive evidence suggests that the efficiency of the home in fostering learning has declined for several decades, but cooperative partnerships between the home and the school can dramatically raise educational productivity (Walberg, 1984). James Comer of Yale University has established that parent involvement at home and in school has improved attendance and achievement of minority and low-income students. Community District 4 in New York City is an excellent example of this. Parents were given a greater opportunity for meaningful involvement in the process of curriculum design as well as other school functions. Principals remained the active academic leaders of their schools even though they shared many of their academic leadership tasks with teachers.

According to Rich, a well-designed program of parental involvement in the schools can (Rich, 1987:36-38):

- improve academic achievement
- build positive school-community relationships
- assist in improving parent understanding of how schools work
- provide assistance to the classroom teacher

On the other side of this issue is the difficulty of balancing and managing the input of parents, and the problems associated with defining the role they should play in the schools. Some choice districts have successfully determined the role of parents while others are still struggling with these decisions.

In successful intradistrict choice systems a climate of trust has been established which encourages the cooperation of parents, teachers and administrators in reaching common educational goals. This climate has been most difficult to implement in communities where parent involvement was nonexistent and not viewed as important by the parents themselves or in communities where previous events may have created a climate of mutual distrust. Intradistrict choice systems without extensive parental involvement and a strong system of information dissemination, may encounter serious difficulties. Yet, successful models do exist which might prove useful in guiding other communities. The experiences of Cambridge. Fall River, and Lowell, Massachusetts, Community District 4 in New York City and Montclair, New Jersey should be studied carefully by any district considering a program of intradistrict choice.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

While common characteristics and problems emerged in the choice programs studied, two central points stood out: (1) choice programs are most effective when tailored to the needs of the individual community(ies) and (2) American choice programs are highly diverse in structure and content.

Choice programs range from a statewide program of interdistrict choice in Minnesota to community-based intradistrict choice in Massachusetts. Other choice programs involve student movement between urban and suburban areas such as those in St. Louis, Milwaukee, and Boston. Still others involve parental choice of traditional neighborhood schools in a district with no magnet schools (open enrollment) or a choice among traditional neighborhood schools and several magnets. Some districts even provide choice among a selection of schools, all of which are alternatives based on special themes or methodologies. Despite this diversity, effective systems of choice do share several common characteristics. They frequently:

* Expand the role of parents through the school selection process itself; some even involve parents in policy-making bodies (other than the Board of Education) and curriculum planning (primarily seen in intradistrict systems)
* Expand the role of teachers as academic leaders
* Result in the creation of smaller schools, or more personal learning environments, for students
* Open up greater opportunities for learning for high risk students and
* Facilitate the enrollment of students in colleges, universities, or public vocational technical schools

Common problems experienced by systems of choice are:

* Parents may find it difficult to make informed decisions or participate in school due to economic pressures (i.e. two-income families). The rise in single parent families also makes it difficult to attain this increased involvement
* Increased busing in both intradistrict and intradistrict choice plans can result in soaring transportation costs and complicated scheduling efforts
* Choice programs based upon specific school academic specializations may require added funds for retraining teachers and staff for the new school focus
* Administrative difficulty in coordinating student choices, transportation, and school budgets.

INTRADISTRICT CHOICE

The best examples of working systems of intradistrict choice were found in Cambridge, Massachusetts, Community District 4, New York City and Montclair, New Jersey. All have had sufficient time to refine their systems. They also have shown substantial improvements in student achievement scores, teacher involvement in the design of educational programs and parental involvement in the schools.

These communities emphasized the development of magnets or special theme schools. All schools are funded equitably to eliminate the possibility of under-funding neighborhood schools.

New choice programs recently implemented in districts such as Fall River and Lowell, Massachusetts, are still being observed. Fall River is facing an uphill battle to improve parent participation. Although viewed as generally successful, the Lowell program has incurred much greater costs for transportation.

Of all choice systems studied, choice within a district composed mostly or entirely of magnet or alternative schools (schools with certain specializations or foci) seems to bring about the most positive results in improved student achievement, closer student-teacher relationships, staff collegiality, innovation, parental involvement and equity. Montclair, New Jersey, Community District 4, New York City, and Cambridge, Massachusetts have been most impressive in these areas.

Some conclusions are possible about intradistrict choice:

* Some districts can document improved student performance since choice was intro duced. However, it is difficult to attribute such improvements to choice alone.
* Two districts studied (Cambridge, Massachusetts and Community District 4, New York City) have reported increased student enrollment in the public schools from former parachioal and/or out of district students.
* Four districts studied (Lowell, Montclair, Cambridge and Community District 4) now have more integrated schools through choice.
* Most districts reported intradistrict choice to be cost effective. One district (Lowell) reported excessively high transportation costs.

INTERDISTRICT CHOICE

Minnesota's Enrollment Options Program is the only existing statewide system of interdistrict choice. To date it has enabled a small number of students, 137 in 1987-88 and 435 in 1988-89 to attend school in a nonresident district.

Minnesota state education officials interviewed are pleased with the program but expect the number of student participants to remain small even after 1990 when district participation becomes mandatory. The objective, they say, is to improve education through increased options; large numbers of participants is not the goal. The program certainly has broadened opportunities for students.

Other interdistrict programs that allow urban students to transfer to suburban schools or vice versa are in operation in cities including Boston, St. Louis and Milwaukee. These programs generally were adopted primarily as desegregation tools. Researchers indicate that some of these exchanges revolve around selective magnets that receive more funds and resources and may lead to inequities with neighborhood schools. Soaring transportation costs were factors in most interdistrict systems studied.

SPECIAL PROGRAMS FOR HIGH-RISK STUDENTS AND POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Several post-secondary choice programs are operating nationally. The most heralded is the Minnesota Post-Secondary Options program, which annually places more than 5,000 eleventh and twelfth graders in college courses.

Minnesota and several other states also have programs aimed at dropouts and high-risk students. These programs are usually quite successful in reaching their goals for targeted populations.

MAGNETS AND CHOICE SYSTEMS

Magnets programs and schools used to create greater diversity in large systems have brought about uneven results. While most (notably Prince George's County) reported increased student achievement, better student attitudes, increased parental participation and improved racial profiles, some faced enormous transportation costs and difficult scheduling. Choice observers question excessive funding for transportation in cities such as St. Louis, Missouri where buildings are sorely in need of repair. But other systems, such as Rochester, New York, report that choice implementation has saved money.

All systems studied showed that magnets and choice expanded educational opportunities for children. Moore and Davenport caution about selective magnets which can limit choice and negatively impact neighborhood schools. Their selective schools study also indicates that the monitoring of choice systems is necessary to ensure equity. If they are not monitored for selectivety, academic and racial segregation may result.

CONCLUSION

The number and variety of choice programs in the United States is surprising given the relatively recent beginning of the movement.

Choice programs studied in Cambridge, Massachusetts; Community District 4, New York City; Montclair, New Jersey; and Minnesota improve parent participation in the schools, empower teachers as academic leaders, shift greater decision-making to smaller administrative units and produce encouragement for dropouts to return. They also brought about a revitalization and enthusiasm among many teachers in those districts. Programs illustrating some of the worst possible results seem to intensify socio-economic differences, cause parental confusion and increase teacher alienation and costs.

Clearly in its early stages, the choice movement is expected to undergo even more changes in the coming decade. Existing choice systems can be observed for their impact on communities using choice.

Programs showing positive results have created alternatives to traditional schools within their public school system. But no one choice model is best for all states or all types of communities -- rural, urban or suburban. As Anthony Alvarado, Superintendent of District 2, New York City, has said: "An eclectic approach may be best ... one tailored to each community" (Alvarado, interview, 1988).

Choice may also be an "onrushing train" as former U.S. Assistant Secretary of Education Chester Finn recently said; but its movement and velocity needs to be gauged carefully by any who wish to climb aboard.

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Appendix A

Cambridge Entrance Criteria

Parent choices are recorded at district offices and placements are based on the following criteria:

Racial Balance: Transfers and new assignments, except special needs students, must meet the requirements of racial balance. The goal is to achieve a minority/non-minority percentage within each school, program and grade that reflects, within a few percentage points above or below, the minority/non-minority percentages of the school system as a whole.

Accordingly, minority students only will have the right of assignment to a school program or grade having a minority population below 30 percent. Non-minority students only will have the right of assignment to a school program or grade having a minority population above 50 percent.

Minority and non-minority students may both apply to schools, programs and grades that are racially balanced.

In the event that there are more applications to a racially balanced school, program or grade that can be accommodated in the available space, priority will be determined as follows:

If the minority population is 5 percent or more above the citywide average, priority will be given to non-minority students; if it is 5 percent or more below the citywide average, priority will go to minority students.

Sibling Preference: Of two students otherwise equally eligible for a single space, the one whose parents have indicated a sibling preference, if any, will get the priority.

Space Available: Space available in a particular school program or grade will be defined according to the policy then in effect as to class size and school capacity, so long as it does not disrupt existing classes.

Special Needs of the Student: Any student requiring a bilingual program will be assigned to such a program, regardless of other provisions of this policy.

Any student requiring a special education program will be assigned according to the Core Evaluation process, regardless of other provisions of this policy.

Place of Residence: The final criterion to be considered, all other priorities being equal, the student living nearest the school requested will have a priority.

Lottery: In the event that, after considering all priorities, there are still more students eligible for particular choices that there are spaces available in that school or program, The Office of Desegregation will conduct a lottery of those in the relevant category or categories (i.e., minority third graders, non-minority fifth graders, or whatever other category might apply), in order to fill the available space. Other applicants to the extent possible, will be granted their other choices.

Waiting List: A parent whose child cannot, for any reason, be assigned to the school or program of his/her first choice may have the child's name placed on a waiting list for the first suitable vacancy. Pupils on the waiting list will have priority, in case of any available vacancy, over new entrants to the school system.

Appendix B
Fall River, Massachusetts
CITYWIDE PARENT PLANNING ADVISORY COUNCIL BY-LAWS

Preamble

In order that the parents of school children in the Fall River Public Schools may have a means of communication and dialogue with the School Administration, the Superintendent of the Fall River Public Schools, with the authorization of the Fall River School Committee, a parent participation organization called the Citywide Parent Planning Advisory Council has been organized.

The main purpose of this organization is to:

1. Involve parents in addressing issues in the Fall River Public Schools, pertaining to minority isolation, or school improvement.
2. Provide an open forum for discussions between parents and Administrators regarding school issues and voted policies. This allows for dialogue on current educational issues, and is not intended to be a vehicle for establishing subcommittees to pursue modification or monitoring of existing Fall River Public Schools programs or policies.
3. Give to its members the responsibility of keeping their respective school informed.

ARTICLE I. Name:

The name of this organization shall be the Citywide Parent Planning Advisory Council, (CPPAC).

ARTICLE II. Goals:

The goals of the Citywide Parent Planning Advisory Council will include, but not be limited to the following:

A. Create and maintain a means of communication among parents, teachers and administrators.

B. Promote an environment of understanding and common purpose so that the best education may be offered to all children.

ARTICLE III. Officers:

A. There shall be two (2) officers of the CPPAC, who shall be co-chairpersons, each elected for two (2) year terms, in alternate years by the current CPPAC membership at the November meeting of each year. Co-chairpersons shall not serve for consecutive terms.

B. Nominations for co-chairpersons shall be made from the general membership by the general membership.

ARTICLE III. (continued)

C. A recording secretary shall be appointed each September to record minutes of each meeting.

D. Co-chairpersons shall be responsible for conducting meetings.

ARTICLE IV. Membership:

A. There shall one (1) CPPAC parent member from each school, selected by the Parent Advisory Council or Parent Organization. Each Advisory Council shall also consist of a representative from Bilingual Education, Special Education, Chapter I and Follow Through. No more than one (1) alternate school shall be designated by any one school. Al schools shall designate their primary and alternate members, by name, by the adjournment of the April meeting this year. Any school or special advisory group that fails to seat a representative by the end of the April meeting shall be considered an absent member and will be granted a representative seat only by written request to the Chair and subsequent approval by a majority vote of the entire Council.

B. Individual representatives shall be elected yearly. Once appointed a member may retain his/her seat in accordance with the selection process in section A, (Article IV).

C. Members shall notify the Co-chairperson(s) and/or the CPPAC Coordinator in writing if they wish to resign from the Council.

ARTICLE V. Meetings:

Meetings shall be held on the first Tuesday of each month, during the school year. If that Tuesday is a holiday, then the meeting will automatically be scheduled for the following Monday.

A. All meetings shall be held at a site to be determined by the Council at the September CPPAC meeting each year.

B. Meetings shall start at 6:30 p.m. and not extend past 8:30 p.m.

C. All meetings shall be conducted in accordance with the CPPAC rules.

D. The agenda shall be determined by the co-chairperson(s) at least seven calendar days before a monthly meeting. The agenda shall include but not be limited to:

1. Call to order.
2. Approval of minutes of preceding meeting.
3. Presentation of reports.
4. Presentation of communications.
5. Presentation of reports.
6. Consolidation of new business.
7. Announcements.
8. Program (if any).
9. Adjournment.

E. A meeting is automatically cancelled, if school is cancelled due to weather. For any other cancellation, members shall be contacted by telephone.

F. Additional meetings may be held at the discretion of the co-chairperson(s). Notification of the membership shall be given at the earliest possible opportunity.

G. All CPPAC members, primary and/or alternate shall report back to their respective Parent Organizations, and give a report of the monthly CPPAC meetings. Where there are no Parent Organizations, members shall report back to the Principal of their school.

H. Members, primary and/or alternate, absent for three (3) consecutive monthly meetings, are no longer members, unless there are extenuating circumstances due to illness. The Principal and Parent Organization will be notified, once a member is dropped.

I. All meetings of the CPPAC are open to the general public.

ARTICLE VI. Voting Policy:

A. Each CPPAC member shall have one vote. (If only one member from a school attends a meeting, the school shall have only one vote.) If no member attends, the school shall have no vote. Alternates shall be allowed to replace a parent member in that person's absence and shall have the voting privilege.

B. CPPAC shall make recommendations by majority votes cast.

C. When voting takes place, members shall have up-to-date knowledge of recommendations to be voted upon, so that lengthy discussions do not ensue.

ARTICLE VII. Subcommittees:

1. Magnet/Survey Subcommittee

   This committee shall be responsible for the preparation, distribution and analysis of surveys sent to parents of children in grades K-8. This committee shall be established by the Chair, for a designated period of time, and for a specific cooperative purpose, with the Magnet or Declining Enrollment Subcommittee.

2. Magnet School Subcommittee

   This committee shall be responsible for investigating the full range of Magnet School options, including a study of model schools, and also, for determining various options to be placed on the surveys to be sent to parents.

All reports and recommendations made by the CPPAC subcommittees shall be submitted to and approved by a majority of votes cast by the full CPPAC, before becoming official CPPAC recommendations to be presented to the Superintendent and to the School Committee of the Fall River Public Schools.

In conjunction with the Administration, and by a majority of votes cast by the Council, additional subcommittees may be established by the CPPAC, within the objectives and the goals established.

Subcommittees no longer needed may be disbanded by a majority vote of the Council.

ARTICLE VIII. Amendments:

A. Amendments may be proposed by any CPPAC member.

B. An amendment proposed by a CPPAC member must be submitted in writing at least twenty (20) days prior to the next regularly scheduled CPPAC meeting. Said amendment is to be forwarded for review by the membership, with the notice of and the agenda for this meeting.

C. Any amendment proposed by a co-chairperson shall also be included with the notice of and the agenda for the next regularly scheduled CPPAC meeting.

D. The By-laws and any subsequent amendment(s) shall take effect upon their passage by a majority of those voting at the CPPAC meeting.

Appendix C

Minnesota Enrollment Options Program Sample Board Resolution

____
Name of School District

Board Resolution on Participation in the School District Enrollment Options Program

Whereas, it is the belief of Independent School District #_____ that parents share the responsibility to provide the most appropriate educational opportunities for their children, and the parental commitment to the educational program of their children is a very significant and positive influence in the educational success of a child.

Therefore, Independent School District #_____ shall participate in the School District Enrollment Options Program for the 1988-89 school year. Independent School District #_____ agrees to:

1. Allow its resident pupils to enroll in other participating districts.
2. Accept all non-resident pupils from other participating districts for the 1988-89 school year, except for the following reasons:
    a. Lack of space in the district.
    b. Lack of space in a particular program or school building.
    c. Late applications.
    d. Other criteria as established by the School Board.
3. Comply with M.S. 123.3515 and any other program requirements as specified in Minnesota laws or State Board rules.

Source: Minnesota Department of Education

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q. What is public school choice?

A. Public school choice refers to parental selection of a public school for their child.

Q. Is there research available to support the concept of choice?

A. Yes. There is a growing body of literature and experience regarding school choice in areas of parental involvement, improving school-student matches, teacher empowerment and student achievement.

Q. Where is public school choice now utilized?

A. At least 23 states are now either using or studying school choice. Some are still investigating ways of encouraging vouchers or other public-private means of choice. Minnesota is the only state to implement a statewide system of open enrollment between districts. Controlled choice is effectively used as a means of meeting desegregation goals in several Massachusetts communities including Cambridge, Fall River, and Lowell. New York City's Harlem District Four utilizes choice through alternatives. Junior High students can choose any school in the district based on their individual interests.

Q. What is controlled choice?

A. Controlled choice limits school selection according to certain guidelines such as desegregation goals, available space in schools, and sibling preference. It prevents segregation, elitism, academic unbalance, overcrowding, etc.

Q. How are teachers affected by a system of public school choice?

A. In most well-designed public school choice systems, both principals and teachers assume the leadership responsibility in the design, implementation and evaluation of special programs. Parents are also included on school planning teams. Many systems allow teachers to choose schools with programs that interest them. This promotes teacher involvement, leadership and innovation.

Q. What are some of the benefits of public school choice?

A. A well-designed system of public school choice can:

(a) increase parental involvement in the schools
(b) empower principals and teachers as leaders
(c) provide for greater personalization of education through the use of specializations and reduction of school size
(d) move control to the school-level from the district level
(e) help desegregate a district or area
(f) revitalize all schools in the area
(g) increase student achievement
(h) reduce dropout rates

Q. What are some of the disadvantages of public school choice?

A. A poor system of public school choice can do the following:

(a) increase racial polarization
(b) confuse parents about their role and choices
(c) be academically overspecialized
(d) "cream off" the most talented students to certain schools.

Q. How would public school choice affect the neighborhood school?

A. If a public school choice system were based on an array of magnet or specialty schools, some students would not attend their neighborhood schools. However, most systems of choice maintain the neighborhood school option for those who desire it.

Q. Would public school choice foster competition?

A. Yes. Some degree of competition would occur, usually in the form of school pride in publicizing its accomplishments. Hucksterism is usually prevented. In a pure choice system, if parents did not select a school in great numbers, then that school would either (a) exist as a small alternative (b) be phased out and teachers moved to a school of greater demand or (c) reevaluate itself and change to meet community needs.

Q. What is the difference between public school choice, a voucher system and tuition tax credits?

A. Public school choice involves choice among public schools only while a voucher system involves both the private as well as the public sectors. Tuition tax credits are, as the name implies, individualized tax credits given to taxpayers who send their children to private or parochial schools (usually in the amount of tuition or a portion of it).

Q. Will choice resegregate schools?

A. No. Controlled choice plans are strictly monitored for racial movement and state desegregation guidelines are maintained.

Q. How do children get to a school in another district?

A. Parents are typically held responsible for transporting students to a designated stop in the nonresident district. From there, the nonresident district transports students to schools. In some cases, the state pays for all transportation.

Q. What if a student cannot decide on a specialty school or is not interested in any of the themes offered in a choice plan (within the district)?

A. Most districts maintain traditional and/or neighborhood schools as part of their choice plans as an option for the undecided students. A more effective way to match students' needs to a school is through guidance counselors, who, like in Harlem District Four, assess students' interests and requested choices.

Q. What if a student does not get his/her choice?

A. Every effort is made to provide each student with his/her first choice, if the student does not get this selection, he/she is put on a waiting list or may reapply the following year in many districts. All decisions are subject to desegregation guidelines, sibling preference and space availability.

Q. What can choice do for urban districts?

A. A choice system can revitalize an urban district, partly by expanding academic options through the creation of specialty schools within the district. Research shows that this type of choice can improve academic achievement in minority and low-income students by matching student needs and interests. It can increase parental involvement and encourage learning.

Cross district choice can inspire innovative programs to attract students and money, where state aid follows students to the district of their choice.

Q. Are parents and especially poor and minority parents able to make sensible and appropriate choices for their children?

A. Research - and the educational success of students in magnets and schools of choice - says clearly that all parents are capable of making wise choices.

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